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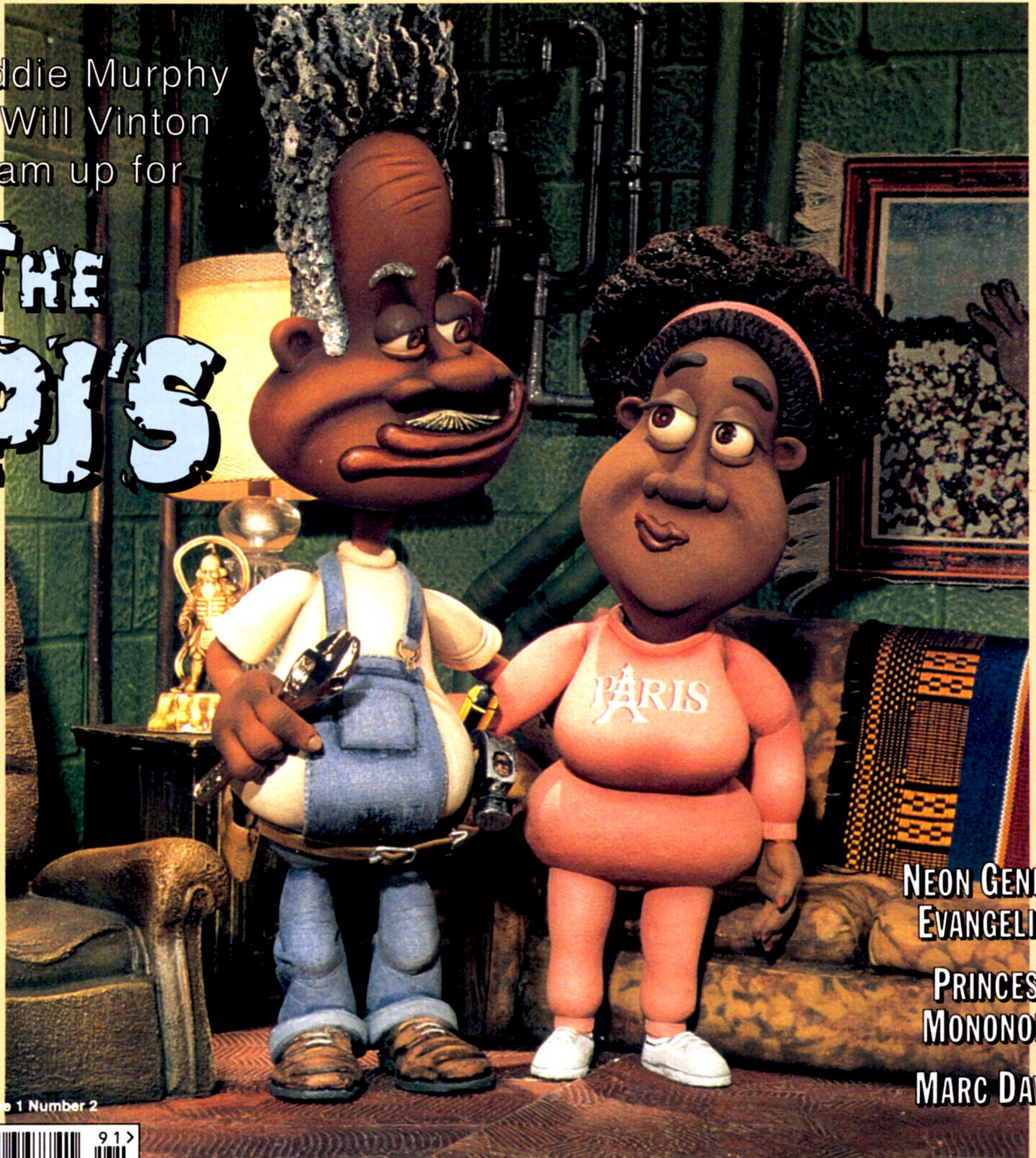
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THE PI'S



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EVANGELION

PRINCESS
MONONOKE

MARC DAVIS

Volume 1 Number 2



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ANIMATION FOR A NEW GENERATION!™

FROM THE EDITOR

CULTURE FLUSH

I suppose we have Trey Parker and Matt Stone to thank for this. Just last week, A.D.V. Video sent me a copy of BITE ME! CHAMELEON, a comedy anime series featuring a fire-plug sized high-school student who gains dominance over his adversaries via the mediums of piss, shit, and soiled sanitary napkins. This comes a scant few months after Central Park's release of THE PING PONG CLUB, another let's-get-nasty comedy series, and arrives simultaneously with Fox's initial promotion of THE P.J.'S, in which the network declares that the show will confront the issue of crack in the ghetto, and follows up with a shot of the protagonist super crouched over some plumbing, his jeans hiked at half-mast across his butt.

Japan is no stranger to raunchy anime, and the west has had a long-time flirtation with the genre. But it seems it wasn't until SOUTH PARK blew the lid off the toilet (*hi-de-hooo!*) that anime distributors and mainstream outlets felt emboldened to immerse themselves in those somewhat murky waters. This does not necessarily auger the end of civilization — the occasional mud-bath can be quite liberating. It can also, in its way, be subtly restricting. Scatology and its like can be the easiest of the "forbidden" humors — it gives the author the aura of rebelliousness without actually requiring him or her to challenge societal norms (there's lots of pee and poop on the Fox Network, but how many abortions?). So while I laugh at such rude behavior, I'm also grateful when the likes of a NEON GENESIS EVANGELION dares to challenge more than just our potty habits. Cartman is fun, but God help us if he becomes anime's sole icon of innovation.

Dan Persons
AFQEditor@aol.com

SHIRLEY WALKER



Whether it's an ambitious, orchestral theme for BATMAN, or an eery, ambiance-laden soundtrack for SPAWN, Shirley Walker has taken anime music to places where few have dared venture. **Randall D. Larson** speaks with the composer.

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The eighties anti-hero finds new life at the end of the nineties with Urban Vision's re-release. **Dennis Fischer** explores his history.

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A preview of the most eagerly awaited film since AKIRA. **Andrew Osmond** interviews MONONOKE'S western handlers, while **Paula Vitaris** discusses the English script with author Neil Gaiman.



THE PJ'S

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The Fox Network presents a Will Vinton production of an Eddie Murphy concept. And if that doesn't pique your interest, have your relatives tell us where to send the flowers. **Laura Schiff** looks into the production of the raucous comedy series, while **Eric Lurio** explores Will Vinton's past.

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A giant robot series as addictive as peanuts, and as daunting as *Finnegan's Wake*? **L. Jagi Lamplighter** ponders the complexities, controversies, and production history of Gainax's most ambitious anime achievement to date.



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If you've ever been charmed by Tinkerbell or seduced by the deliciously evil Cruella De Vil, you know what Marc Davis, one of the original Nine Old Men, is capable of. **Mike Lyons** delves into the background of a bona-fide animation legend.

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Publisher: Frederick S. Clarke. **Editor:** Dan Persons. **Tokyo Bureau:** Hiroki Kakihsa. A magazine without **Contributors** is like a day without sunshine: Dennis Fischer, Lawrence French, Russell J. Handelman, L. Jagi Lamplighter, Randall D. Larson, Eric Lurio, Mike Lyons, Even Nelson, Andrew Osmond, Mitch Persons, Dan Scapperotti, Laura Schiff, Paula Vitaris. **Editorial Operations Manager:** Elaine Fiedler. **Editorial Production:** Lisa Tomczak-Walkington, David Bellm.

Publisher's Assistant: Lisa Coduto. **Circulation:** Faith Redding. **Business Manager:** Celeste Casey Clarke

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SHARP CURVES AHEAD: WOMEN OF POWER COME TO THE FORE

B-movie fan and critic Joe Bob Briggs once said of actress Julie Strain, "Sometimes she gets this look in her eyes that makes a man think, 'I don't know if she wants to have sex with me or kill me. And right now, I don't care.'"

There are many others out there who also "don't care." As the "Queen of the B's," Strain has an ever-growing fan base. Starring in films with such titles as *BIKINI SQUAD* and *BLOOD SURF*, she has more than earned her title. Standing six-foot-one, with feral/goddess looks and almost non-existent outfits, it seems that there's no realm that she can't conquer. She will soon prove this again, as she fits her mind-bending presence into the animation frame.

Strain will serve as the model and voice for the title character in the animated sequel, *HEAVY METAL: FAKK2*. "I think people are going to love this movie, no matter what," said Strain, "because people are hungry for animation, they're hungry for more *HEAVY METAL*, they're hungry for a sexy vixen and they're hungry for something that will combine all of that and get them to the movie theatre, where they can hear some loud rock and roll."

The film (which is currently in production at Cine Group Animation in Montreal and Trixter Studio in Munich, Germany) has been a labor-of-love for Strain's husband, Kevin Eastman, who serves as the screenwriter and producer for *FAKK2*. Best known as the creator of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja*



FAKK FINDERS UNITE: Current "Queen of the B's" Julie Strain is seeking new empires to conquer. Thanks to significant other Kevin Eastman, she may just have found the next big challenge in her upcoming feature project. *HEAVY METAL: FAKK2*

Turtles, Eastman bought the rights to the cult magazine *Heavy Metal* in 1992. Several years later, Eastman convinced Columbia Pictures to release the original *HEAVY METAL* film on video. "I knew that there was an entire audience hungry to see it after having seen it in 1981," said Eastman. "I also thought that there was a whole other audience that would enjoy this as the last, R-rated, animated studio effort."

The *HEAVY METAL* sequel will be more of a straightforward narrative than the episodic original. *FAKK2* will center on Julia, an innocent young woman, who is left as the only surviving member of her race, after the evil Lord Tyler destroys her home planet. In classic revenge story fashion, Julia turns vigilante. "When I set out to make *HEAVY METAL: FAKK2*, I wanted to create my own spin of some of my favorite movies and what they've meant to me," said Eastman. "For example, I

wanted something that had the desperation of *ROAD WARRIOR*, the intensity of *ALIENS*, the attitude of *TERMINATOR* and the magnitude of Akira Kurosawa's *RAN*. I liked all of those elements and then I twisted them into a *BLADE RUNNER*-esque setting."

By the way, *FAKK2* stands for "Federation Assigned Kinogenic Killzone to the second power," a label that the Federation assigns to any planet that is deadly to carbon-based life forms. Eastman explains, "As the secret is revealed of what Tyler takes from her world and does to her world, [the main character] starts off as Julia, but as the story proceeds, she takes on that name of death. What that means to Tyler, the nemesis, is that she is death to him."

Helping to set the tone for *FAKK2* is noted fantasy artist Simon Bisley, who has created some distinct conceptual art for the film. "It's this look of over-the-top technology and medieval barbarism

and we've combined that into the story," noted Eastman. "Simon visualized that completely and that's been the foundation that everything has been built on. Simon did about 70 paintings and they're plastered all over the designers' desks. They are all huge fans of Simon and they know to pull something off in that style — 'Simonizing' is what I call it — would be pretty amazing."

Strain is confident that this unique addition to the current animation race will satisfy both her legions of hard-core fans, as well as devotees of the

medium. "I have no doubt in my mind that people who don't even want to like Julie Strain, or don't want to like animation, are really going to be touched by this movie, maybe not like *TITANIC*, but it's going to touch you. You're not going to leave it, forget it and walk on to something else; you're really going to think about the story line and 'What if these things could really happen?'"

"Hopefully, we'll push some boundaries a little bit, not just visually, but story wise and I think we'll carve out our own piece of turf," said Eastman. "It's going to be an interesting experiment to see what happens. You have things like *TOY STORY*, which was amazing. Disney efforts are always interesting; Dream Works with *PRINCE OF EGYPT*; everything that's being done with PC games and video games is just getting better and better. It's bringing the audience for visually stimulating stuff to a whole other level of 'coolness.'"

**NEXT UP:
THE GROOVY GHOULIES
REUNION TOUR**

Darrell McNeil heard his muse early on Saturday mornings. Weaned on JONNY QUEST, JOSIE AND THE PUSSYCATS, SPACE GHOST and other groovy sixties 'toons, McNeil could clearly see his career path. Now, as head of Gold Medal Productions, the animator is using that Hanna-Barbera "Golden Age" as influence for THE ADVENTURES OF ARTEMIS AND S.O.S. SUPERMODELS, his new animated series, which is currently in development.

"I deliberately worked out the idea like that," said McNeil. "Similar to a show like FRANKENSTEIN JR. AND THE IMPOSSIBLES. You have two 'straight' episodes, combined with a comical one."

McNeil's project will focus on two separate characters. Headlining is the more serious and action-oriented ARTEMIS, a mysterious and powerful super heroine, who

takes her name from the Greek goddess of the hunt. With super powers and a California-girl bod (along with a bikini-like outfit), Artemis may just strike the same "Girl Power" gold as BUFFY and ZENA. "Artemis is basically the 1940's Superman mixed with THE FUGITIVE," added McNeil. "She leaps, she doesn't fly and her vulnerability is to atomic radiation."

As an added character dynamic, Artemis doesn't speak. "She doesn't have a sidekick that interprets what she's saying and you can't read her thoughts," said McNeil. "Everything you judge from her comes from what she does and how she reacts to it."

The other segment of the show will focus on a more razor sharp satire of the modelling industry (with a super-hero theme of course) in S.O.S. SUPERMODELS. When danger ("or, even worse, lack of mousse") is in the air, Bambi, Brandy and Brenda (a.k.a. Beach Bunny, Beautiful Dreamer and Bat-

tle Babe) spring into action.

McNeil describes SUPERMODELS as "Jay Ward meets Charlie's Angels," saying that he hopes to duplicate some of the comic genius of the man behind BULLWINKLE. "They tend to get along like real models: they fight and scrape."

To add to the fact that ARTEMIS AND S.O.S. SUPERMODELS is a celebration of '60s TV animation, McNeil has even snagged SPACE GHOST voice and personal friend Gary Owens to narrate a one-minute promo for the show.



SPACE GHOST was one of the seminal shows for McNeil, during his 'toon-fanatic childhood. After graduating from UCLA, McNeil nabbed a job at the H-B Studios, where he met Alex Toth, the creative force behind SPACE GHOST and his personal idol.

Since then, McNeil has become something of a Renaissance man in the animation industry, working in every corner from animation to story board to producing (he even co-authored, *Alex Toth: By Design*, with his hero).

"Almost everyone out there wants to go for what are called 'branded' shows," said McNeil of television animation. "These are basically 'tie-ins,' something that has been established someplace else. If you look at any of the hour-long action/adventure shows, they're all either based on movies, TV shows or comics. The studios want instant identification, which makes it tough for a project like mine."

Despite such obstacles, McNeil said that Saturday mornings is still where his passion lies, "When I don't get up early that first Saturday of the new season, I know I've had enough of this business."

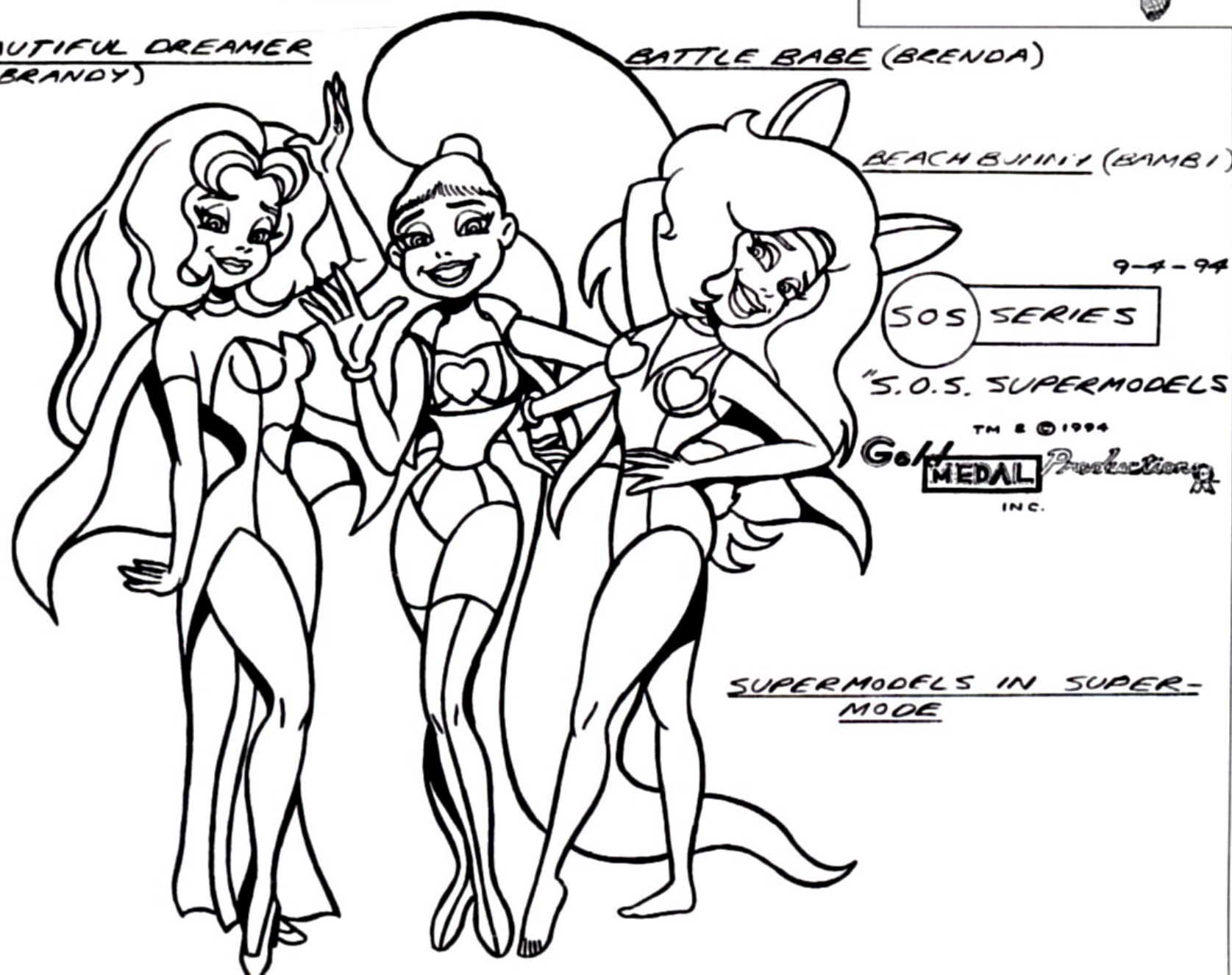
AFQ

GIRL (SUPER-) POWERED: Harkening back to the clean designs of '60s Hanna-Barbera and throwing in a dash Jay Ward irreverence, ARTEMIS (above top and center) AND THE S.O.S. SUPERMODELS (below) strike a blow for action anime fans everywhere.

BEAUTIFUL DREAMER
(BRANDY)

BATTLE BABE (BRENDA)

BEACH BUNNY (BAMBI)



SUPERMODELS IN SUPER-MODE

SUPERHEROS

BY THE

SCORE

**Composer Shirley Walker brings
a cinematic sweep to animated films.**

by RANDALL D.
LARSON

With the advent of serious animated fantasy/drama such as HBO's *SPAWN* and Warners' *BATMAN* and *SUPERMAN* series, the art of scoring for animation has taken a turn for the better. As animated features and television series are directed, choreographed, animated, and scored as if they were live action films, they attain a dramatic edge previously encountered only in their live-action brethren. Amongst animation's best musical practitioners is Shirley Walker, one of the first women to succeed in the male-dominated Hollywood film music community.

Walker was originally an orchestrator and conductor working for and with such composers as Danny Elfman, Carter Burwell, Brad Fiedel, and Hans Zimmer. An opportunity to work with director-composer John Carpenter on his *MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN* led to Walker's first solo composition, one of the first orchestral soundtracks to be scored by a woman.

Working out of a studio in Chatsworth, California, Walker has concocted electrifying music for high-end action films such as *TURBULENCE*, plus a fistful of cable-TV movies, including *THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN ZOOM* and *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE II*, and the short-lived Fox TV series, *SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND*. But it's her associations with such animated series as *BATMAN* and *SPAWN* that have shown

Walker's mettle over the years. She scored both seasons of HBO's *SPAWN*, and is the music supervisor for the new *BATMAN/SUPERMAN ADVENTURES* for Warner Animation, overseeing a fistful of episode composers and writing a few scores by herself.

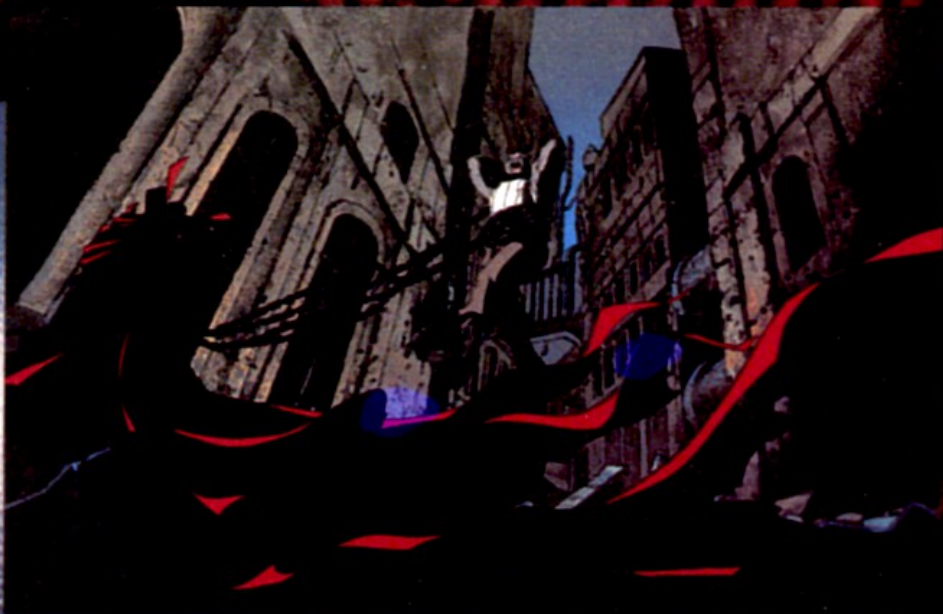
Music is more important in serious animated dramas. The animated film doesn't have the luxury of the kind of performance nuances that a live-action actor can bring to a role, so music must create a lot of the emotional impact embodied by the drawn characters. The pace of the storytelling is also tougher in animation than in live-action. "Something that would take two minutes to unfold in live-action is going to happen in 40 seconds in animation," said Walker. "If you're writing 15 minutes of music for animation, it's like 45 minutes of live action music! You have to be able to get your music to turn around on a dime."

The individual *BATMAN* and *SUPERMAN* shows — as well as the combined new series — have always treated their subjects seriously; directed like fantastic dramas rather than cartoons. The music has also followed suit. "The producers of the shows wanted a real differentiation between the Carl Stalling/Bugs Bunny style of comedy animation that Warners does and the more serious, dramatic Batman/Superman show," said Walker. "In that sense, it's been great. We almost can't be dark enough for them with the

music. We actually had to tone back a bit last fall — the Warner Bros. Network was concerned about the show being a little bit too adult, maybe too scary!"

Walker's music for the show is built around distinctive themes for the characters. Those themes create the sense of heroism or villainy that the action music uses to sonically support the drama, while the quieter interludes will more subtly support character relationships through use of the same themes. "On the animated *BATMAN*, I got lucky," Walker said. "The producers loved the first theme that came out, and we were fine. We all agreed that there was a darkness to the Batman character that we wanted the music to state. The *SUPERMAN* theme, though, is the second one I did for that show. At first we wanted to do the theme differently — not what you'd expect: John Williams-sounding. We didn't want to use 'Superman' rhythmically in the music, but we wanted it to have the feel of American cities of the '40s. That's where we started, anyway, but it never worked. We ended up with 'Su-per-MAN!' — da-da-DAAA!" The new, combined *BATMAN/SUPERMAN ADVENTURES* features an amalgamation of both themes. "We took some of the darkness of the Batman music and then the type of heroism from the Superman music to create the current, new

RIGHT: In good (guy) company. Shirley Walker with some close friends.





theme," she said.

Walker's approach for the show has been to create themes for all the major recurring characters, and weave those themes throughout the episodes when those characters appear. The themes interact musically just as the characters do dramatically; new motifs appear for new characters. Walker composed the BATMAN themes, but left much of the theme composition on SUPERMAN (beyond its primary motif) to her subordinates. "I let the composers in the rotation have a little more of that responsibility on SUPERMAN," said Walker. "I created themes for all the major characters on BATMAN, and we do bring them back from show to show, which is a lot of fun, actually. Over the span of two years there have been 55 half hour shows — every single one of them is scored."

As music supervisor, Walker coordinates all the music for the show and assigns individual episodes to the staff composers, saving a few for herself. "I get to pick the good shows and I give them the dogs!" she grinned. "I get to write all the themes, however many I want to and have the time for, and then they have bits in the shows to do. I'm at the scoring stage when they are

recording and I can make any last minute adjustments that we might need to make. So they get all the hard work and I get all the glory!"

Her involvement with the original BATMAN series resulted in her scoring the first animated feature, BATMAN: MASK OF THE PHANTASM. "That's probably the best score I've had the chance to write," Walker said. "Warner Bros. gave me a great orchestra, I had lots of time, and I had the enthusiastic support of everyone who was on the series. It was pretty exciting for me." Walker supervised the music of the second feature, SUB-ZERO, relegating composition duties to Michael McCuistion.

The BATMAN/SUPERMAN series were orchestral scores, supplemented by electronics, whereas SPAWN was entirely electronic, composed and performed by Walker in her Chatsworth studio. "SPAWN is the first series that I have actually sat in my studio and done it from first thought to final tape," she said. "It's wholly electronic and very sound-oriented. When you watch the finished show you can't tell what's music and what's sound effect. When I do the orchestral stuff, I work at the time-honored piano keyboard with pencil and paper. BATMAN, for example, is completely written out and orchestrated." SPAWN, which relies on much more sound-design and integration of sound effect within the music, is composed wholly on the computer.

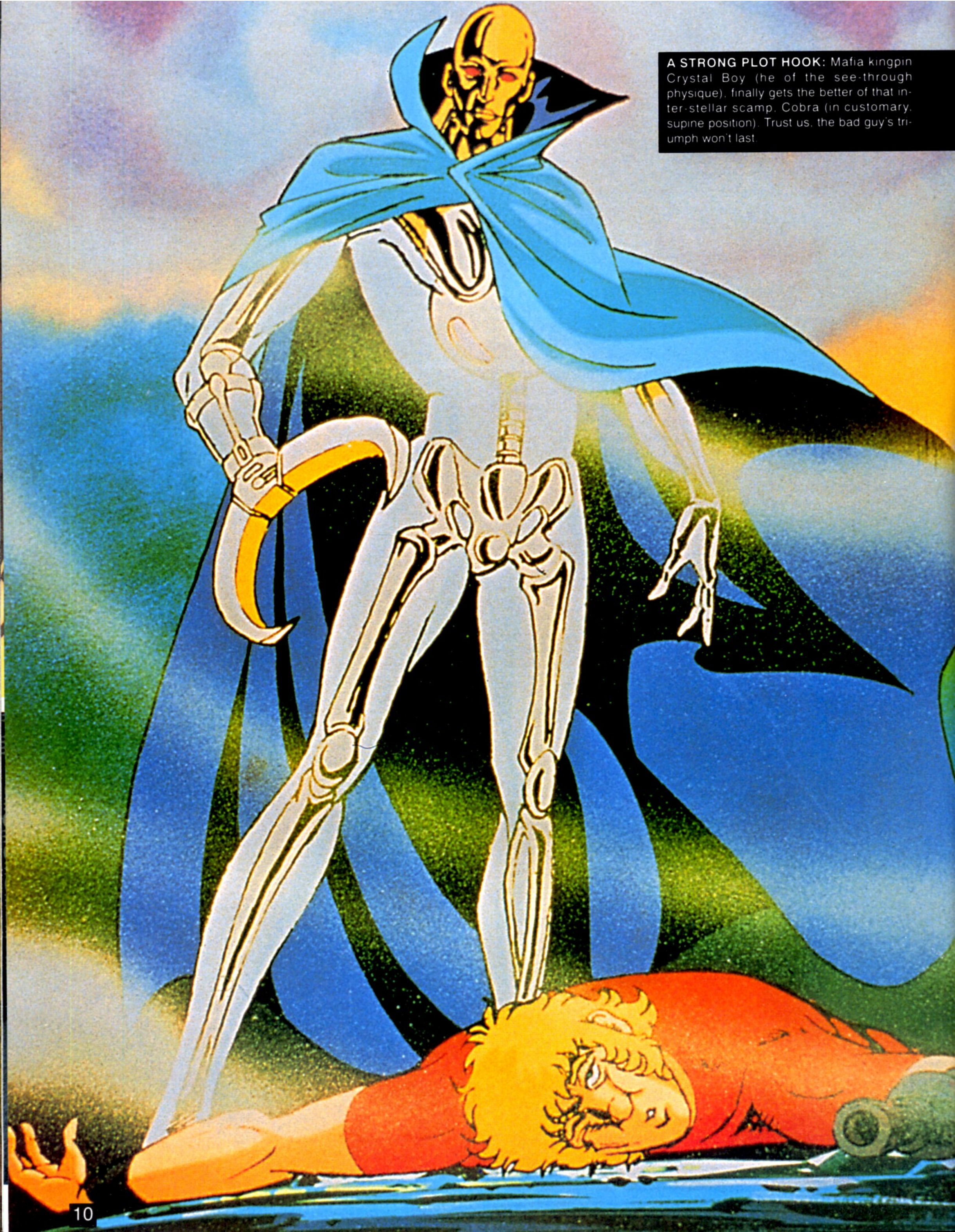
With a few exceptions, Walker's work in

film music — both animated and live-action — has been for science fiction or horror subjects. It's a genre and a sound that seems to contradict her kindly appearance. But she doesn't really mind the pigeon-holding. "Science fiction was where I happened to get started, and I love it because it's so fantastical," Walker said. "I get to write things that are just so much bigger than life, or they're creepy and weird. That is so much fun — especially for somebody who looks like I do — to get to do this weird stuff. It's funny — the packaging doesn't fit the sound!" **AFA**

ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT: Known for her orchestral work for the DC heroes (right), Walker employed her electronic studio (below and left bottom) to generate the ambient score for SPAWN (upper left).



A STRONG PLOT HOOK: Mafia kingpin Crystal Boy (he of the see-through physique), finally gets the better of that inter-stellar scamp, Cobra (in customary, supine position). Trust us, the bad guy's triumph won't last.



A blaster from the past finds new life on video.

Space Adventure COBRA

Of all the rogues in the galaxy, Cobra is definitely in a league by himself. With his trademark cigar, twinkle in his eye, and psychogun grafted to his left arm, he has made an indelible impression on action fans since his first appearance in *Shonen Jump* magazine in 1977. Created, written, and drawn by Buichi Terasawa, Cobra's adventures ran for seven years, spawning an animated TV series, a color pin-up book, *Cobra Girls*, and the recently released animated feature, *SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA*, from Urban Vision.

Terasawa's non-Cobra projects included such mangas as *Bat*, *Goku*, and *Kabuto*, but it was Cobra who attracted the attention of Japanese animation director Osamu Dezaki, subsequent helmer of *THE PROFESSIONAL* and *BLACK JACK*. In 1985, Dezaki's film version, *SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA*, hit the screen, picking up the rogue's career at the beginning of Terasawa's manga saga, and carrying it forward to his long-standing conflict with the Mafia Guild, a powerful criminal organization that controls much of the Seventh Galaxy.

Where the Terasawa original "borrowed" Phil Dick's basic concept from *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* (which eventually became Paul Verhoeven's *TOTAL RECALL*) — opening with an implanted, recreational space adventure/spy caper memory reactivating Cobra's recollections of being a lone-wolf space pirate — Dezaki's film drops this homage and

begins with beautiful bounty hunter Jane Flower stumbling upon the rogue in a deep-space bar. Jane doesn't recognize the new-look Cobra, who has had his appearance altered to escape the long arm of the Guild. Later, when members of the Mafia smash into Jane's hotel room in an effort to get Cobra, she becomes convinced of his identity. Falling for the fast-talking rogue, she persuades him to help her rescue her sister from prison.

The English language version of the film — which had a limited theatrical run here before its video release — was prepared by Carl Macek, who originally wanted to acquire the film for Streamline Pictures, the anime line that was distributed by the now-bankrupt Orion Home Video. "It took a long time to acquire," Macek explained. "About the time I made the acquisition was just approximately the time when the Orion deal was happening, and Orion was not responsive to the acquisition of the film. So it just sat around not going anywhere for a while. The rights were expiring, so I got another company to distribute it and share the burden of distribution. I always



ARMED FOR ACTION: Born in the go-go seventies, space rascal Cobra brought his devil-may-care panache first to a TV series, and then to a feature film directed by Osamu Dezaki.

found it to be a really excellent film, and I always liked the [TV] series *COBRA* as well."

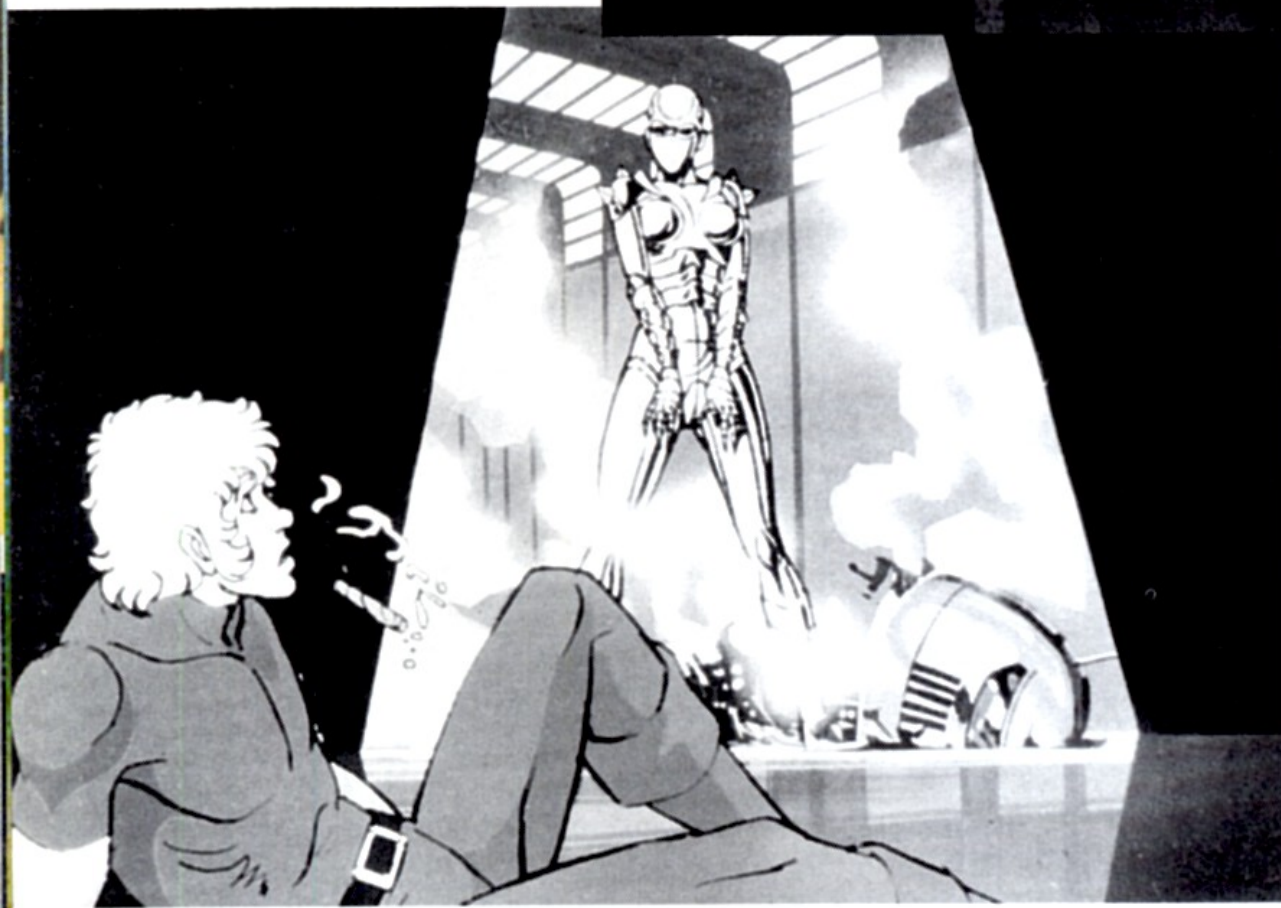
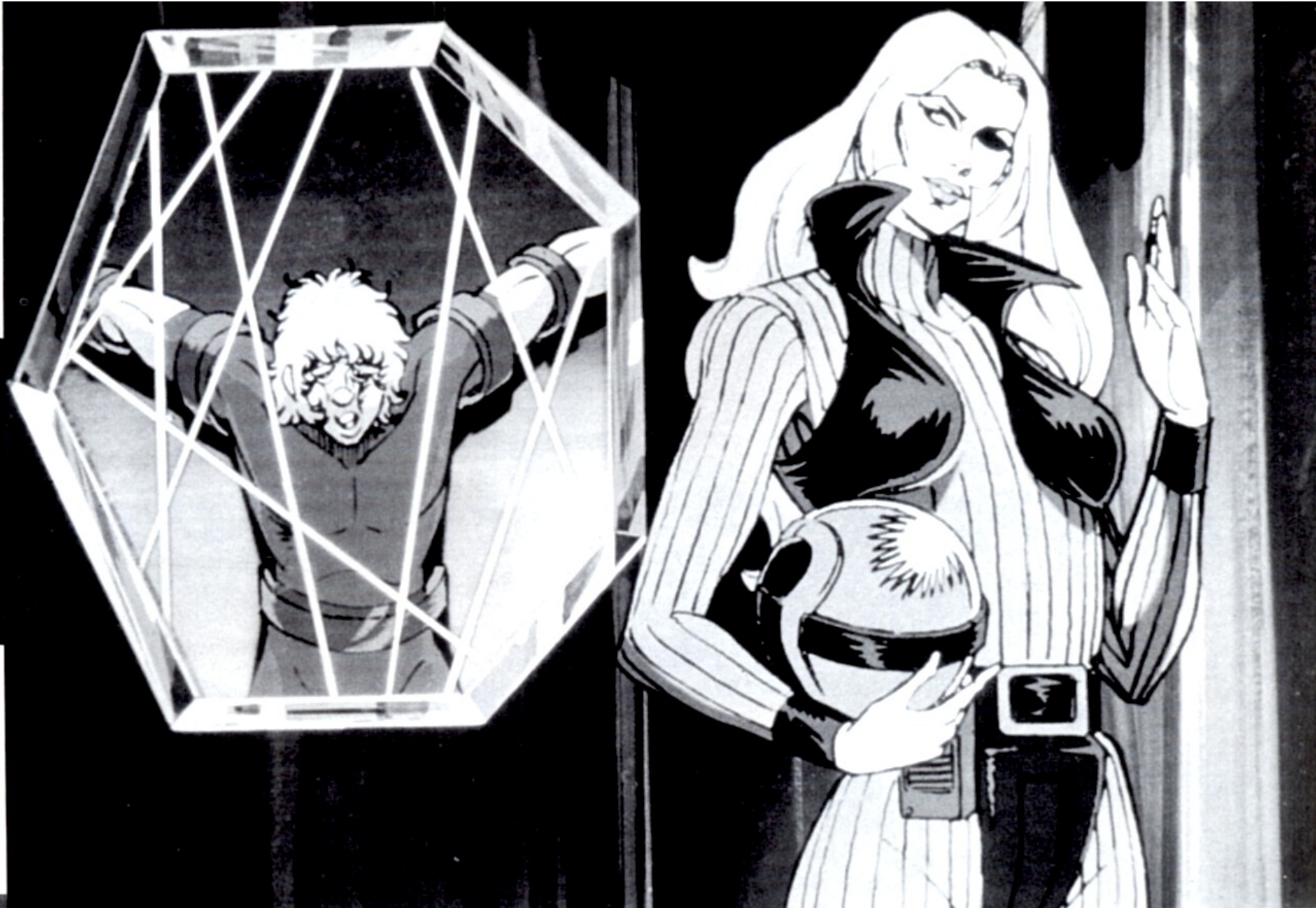
In Japan, *COBRA* started as a 31-episode television series. Macek called the show part of "that Silver Age of Japanese animation, a period of time when Japanese animation had really good stories based on solid manga or solid Japanese pop culture. It's a very good story — timeless. The production technique was such that it actually looks pretty good today."

Macek knew Terasawa personally, having met him on many occasions. Macek described Cobra's creator as, "Unique. He is a

by DENNIS
FISCHER

HE'S HAD BETTER DAYS:

In the tradition of rogues throughout history, Cobra frequently finds himself at a disadvantage (just as frequently at the hands of the female member of the species).



hybrid — he's very traditionally Japanese but very much interested in the West, so he's got like left brain, right brain conflict. He's very clever, talented, forward-thinking, creative. I always wanted to do some of his stuff because I like it. I think it's really solid storytelling."

In many ways, Cobra is a classic, western anti-hero. He's not above extortion or stealing, but considers himself honorable and resents the Space Mafia's attempts to control everything and exploit people. He becomes *persona non grata* after he steals from the Mafia and is marked for death by its leader, Crystal Boy, whose transparent exterior is unaffected by the rays of Cobra's powerful psychogun.

As Macek explained it, "What you see in Cobra is an amalgamation of Matt Helm, OUR MAN FLINT, THE MAN FROM

ATURE COBRA uses a special process to create the effect of 3-D without glasses. Actually, what viewers discover within is a feature film heavily larded through with extended multiplane sequences. Said Macek, "It was a technique that was pioneered by TMS in the '80s. They produced a TV series in this '3-D' technique, and they did SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA in this technique in an attempt to exploit this peculiarity of human physiology.

"[The lateral motion] creates [an appearance of] depth. If you were doing traditional animation in 3-D, it would look like a Viewmaster effect, but that is not the case with this thing. It's not a Viewmaster venue — it's subtle, but it really works. On film it looks much better than it does on video — I don't know why. [For the film version] we subtitled it and the subtitles actually float in

UNCLE, and all kinds of James Bond-type stuff mashed into one guy in a science fiction setting. There's a smart, wisecracking, devil-may-care hero or anti-hero pulling off a variety of ultra-universal plots. To me, it's the essence of comic book storytelling."

The box of the Urban Vision release claims that SPACE ADVENTURE

front of the picture, which is kind of an amazing experience. It's slightly different on TV because you have to focus in on the box.

"I just watched it on the big screen. We also have distribution rights theatrically, and I showed it at Cal State Long Beach as part of a course on filmmaking. I had never seen it projected on the big screen, but on the big screen it *does* have the effect of 3-D. It's a scientific or physiological concept of 3-D in which the entire film is shot in multiplane, and the way everything moves — the background moving in one direction at a certain speed, the foreground in another direction at a certain speed, and the middle area moves or doesn't move — it creates a parallax, and a parallax creates depth. You can see it on the big screen when it's projected. It has amazing depth clarity." [Home viewers can emphasize the 3-D effect by using stereo glasses they have left over from the THIRD ROCK 3-D special or the WORLD'S WILDEST ROLLER COASTER videos, *not* the red/green kind. — ed.]

The poignant subtext to the story concerns three sisters. Jane Flower is the first — she dies tragically, but her love for Cobra lives on in one of her siblings, head of the Snow Guerrillas. The third falls under the spell of Crystal Boy. According to Mackey, "It's almost like Greek tragedy: it deals with universal themes of redemption, about how a character is motivated to act in a particular way and realizes too late what the stakes have been and then makes the ultimate sacrifice. I think [the stories] are much more poignant as opposed to typical, western storytelling where it's G.I. Joe to the rescue. There's a poignancy to the sto-

"HE'S A
GOODY
GUYY
WHO



ABOVE: Shifty trigger finger. When the art for the COBRA manga was "flopped" to handle western, left-to-right reading patterns, the left-handed psychogun suddenly became a righty. TOP RIGHT: Captain Harlock take note. Not all space pirates are moody, introspective loners. There are times when Cobra even makes it look like fun.

ISN'T THAT *NICE*, A
THIEF WHO'S A
HERO, A CON MAN
WHO'S A STAR.
YOU GOTTA LOVE
HIM."

rytelling, whether it's the identical twin sisters or the brother who has gone bad, or the lifelong friend who has gone bad like in *FIST OF THE NORTH STAR*, a film which has a similar theme of familial conflict."

The morality of the film might seem a little questionable, given that the hero is no more than a pirate himself. However, Macek likened it to *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*. "What makes Indiana Jones any better than Bellocq?" he said. "They both steal things. [Indy is] the good guy, but he's killing guys left and right, he's backing them up into airplane propellers, shooting guys down. You have to take these stories with a grain of salt and recognize the melodrama. They *are* melodrama. You're not dealing with sophisticat-

ed, Faulkneresque storytelling, you're dealing with very, very good melodrama. To me, if you can exploit the melodrama, that's what makes it entertaining. It becomes really thick in terms of suspension of disbelief, the believability factor, but if you can get past that and submerge yourself in the melodrama, I think it's very effective."

With anime, as with other things, Sturgeon's law applies (i.e. "90% of everything is crap"). However, there are always those titles that stand out for one reason or another. According to Macek, "You have to analyze the worth of a product as a piece of entertainment. To me, *SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA* is infinitely more entertaining than a porno anime with big-breasted women being raped by some demon. I think you can

get something out of watching *SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA* in terms of subtext, morality, and honor. Other people's points of view are there and are always going to be there. Or we can watch some quickie exploitation cartoon, and it's just that, just cheap thrills and see you later. It doesn't last."

As Marv Wolfman, American editor of the *COBRA* manga series, described it, Cobra is "a good guy who really isn't that nice, a thief who is a hero, a con man who is a star. Not true and blue, but a character who could shaft you and still come out being likable."

Remember when science fiction was fun and adventurous? *SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA* does. Maybe that explains its enduring appeal.

AFQ

Get ready for

PRINCESS MONONOKE

Is the mainstream primed for anime?

Disney finds out this summer when it brings the Miyazaki masterpiece west.

Selling any animated film is a challenge, but *THE PRINCESS MONONOKE*, to be theatrically released by Miramax this spring, may be more difficult than most. Originally titled *MONONOKE HIME*, the film is planned to be the highest-profile anime release ever attempted in the West. It's proved its mettle at home, where it's the biggest domestic hit in history, with boxoffice receipts of a staggering \$160 million and around four million units shifted on video. It's also directed by Hayao Miyazaki, whose *KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE* won glowing reviews and good sales when Buena Vista Home Video released a dub last September. So what's the snag?

The snag is that *MONONOKE* is not *KIKI*. More Kurosawa than Disney, it's a complex, sometimes dark, sometimes violent film relating a bloody battle between man and the forces of nature. Set in a medieval Japan of shoguns and samurai, it tells of a young man's struggle for peace when humans invade a forest guarded by animal gods and elemental powers. Peace is not easy. Early on, the hero is forced to shoot an arrow at an attacking warrior. Thanks to his magic empowerment, the arrow severs his enemy's arms at the elbow and leaves them dangling from a tree. *Snow White* this ain't.


Such moments, according to Scott Martin, Miramax Vice President of post-production, will almost certainly push *MONONOKE*'s rating to PG-13. This is terrain that mainstream, Western animation — scatological exceptions like *SOUTH PARK* aside — traditionally fears to tread. But Martin does not doubt the film will find an audience. Speaking to us as the primary dubbing of *MONONOKE* drew to a close, Martin acknowledged that the film will have to tap the market which embraced such hits as *AKIRA* and *GHOST IN THE SHELL*, and then explained how the film is poised to capture a broader audience: "It already has an core, built-in audience of anime fans. What Miramax is good at is building on that core, widening the market. *MONONOKE* is a 'young people's' film in some ways — we're looking predominantly at 15- to 21-year olds — but it can appeal beyond that as well. We've shown *MONONOKE* to a huge range of Hollywood people, stars and executives, and they've all been really impressed and excited. It's not just an action film, but a truly epic adventure and we want to keep that appeal."

Martin concedes he was initially uncertain if the film would click with foreign viewers. "Its huge success in Japan demonstrated it's a good film. Miyazaki has al-

ways made pictures that are not just cartoons but have real stories, and plots and characters you'd find in a regular live-action film or an arthouse release. Hollywood animation is moving that way, too. We've gotten away from the *SNOW WHITE* image. Films like Disney's *THE LION KING* cater to an older, more sophisticated audience that's being drawn to the medium. But *MONONOKE* is so complicated and different that at first we didn't know if it could play in America. What made the difference were the actors we got. We knew they'd be good, but they've surpassed all expectations."

In keeping with recent animated efforts, *MONONOKE*'s main voice-actors are well-known Hollywood talents. The eponymous heroine San — a kind of female Mowgli raised by great wolves — is voiced by Claire Danes, who co-starred with Leonardo DiCaprio in *ROMEO AND JULIET* and was more recently seen as young Cosette in Bille August's remake of *LES MISERABLES*. San's adversary, the equally dedicated Lady Eboshi, is played by Minnie Driver, star of *GOOD WILL HUNTING* and *GROSSE POINT BLANK*. Billy Crudup, playing the exiled hero

by **ANDREW
OSMOND**

A close-up illustration of San, the 'Princess Ghost' from Studio Ghibli's 'The Princess Mononoke'. She is shown from the chest up, wearing her signature orange tunic and a headband with three circular ornaments. Her dark hair is pulled back, and she has a determined expression. She is holding a large, white, feathered object, possibly a bird's wing, which she is using to shield her face or as a weapon. The background is a dark, deep blue, suggesting a night sky or a cave. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting her face and the texture of the feathers.

NO KIDDING AROUND: San, the "Princess Ghost" who haunts the despoilers of an ancient forest, demonstrates the personality traits of a classic Miyazaki heroine, and a feral intensity that is all her own. Disney brings **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE** west through its Miramax arm.



PUTTING MAGIC INTO THE FANTASY: Director Hayao Miyazaki (left) consults with MONONOKE composer and longtime collaborator Joe Hisaishi.

Ashitaka, appeared in *INVENTING THE ABBOTTS* and Barry Levinson's controversial *SLEEPERS*. The wily monk Jiko Bou, Eboshi's uncertain ally, is voiced by Billy Bob Thornton, writer, director and star of *SLINGBLADE*, and James Carville replicant in the satire *PRIMARY COLORS*. Last, but definitely not least, Moro, venerable she-wolf goddess and guardian of the holy forest of Shishi Gami, is voiced by a not unknown actress named Gillian Anderson. Yes, *that* Gillian Anderson.

"In a live-action film," Martin said, "there's a sense in which you're always yourself. Whenever you're on screen, the audience looks at *you*. But in *MONONOKE*, all that you're left with is your voice, and you suddenly have to learn how to become something else entirely, like a giant boar or a wolf." Gillian Anderson, who came into the film straight from *THE X-FILES* movie, took on the task with gusto. "Anderson was great. She's a huge Miyazaki fan and very excited to be doing the film. After the first session, we looked at each other and said, 'Wow.' She was so willing to open up, to really get into her character, not just as a wolf but as a mother who's raised this girl from a different species."

Minnie Driver had a similarly complex role. "Lady Eboshi is so interesting as a character," said Martin. "On the face of it

she's doing such terrible things, cutting down the trees, plundering the forests. But she also has so much good in her, rescuing outcasts and saving girls from prostitution. We were worried the dub would make her too stern, too unsympathetic. But Driver got it off first bat. The quality of her voice, together with her acting ability, really conveys the fact this is a dynamic, forceful, charismatic person. It was the same with the other actors. They came straight in, they got into character, they developed it and in an hour or so they had that character to a tee."

Martin is equally enthusiastic about the translation. "I could honestly show you the English and Japanese films side-by-side and you wouldn't know which was the original. You couldn't even tell by lip-sync, because *MONONOKE*'s Japanese dialogue was recorded after the animation." The English credit (Miyazaki wrote the original screenplay) goes to fantasy writer Neil Gaiman, creator of the comic-strip epic *Sandman*, who had to render a "literal" *MONONOKE* translation into something digestible for western audiences. "The man's a genius," said Martin. "He spent endless hours winding the tape back and forth, working out what phrase will fit the action and still sound pleasant to the ear."

Gaiman's job required intercultural clarifications. "We want to keep the work as it

is, stay true to it," Martin stressed. "But there are some things that need to be explained. *MONONOKE* has an unfamiliar setting and mythology, full of strange monsters and supernatural beings. In the original film, there's a single on-screen line at the beginning: 'Once this country was covered with deep forests, where the ancient gods presided.' That's fine for Japanese audiences, but we'll have a more detailed voice-over at that point so American viewers know the background. Again, there's a very symbolic scene near the beginning, where Ashitaka severs a lock of his hair and puts it on an altar before going into exile. In Japan, that hair is like a person's mortal remains: it signifies Ashitaka is a dead person, a ghost, in the eyes of his people. That's not something Western audiences will pick up on, so Gaiman has put a nice bit of explanation in the dialogue."

Aside from these modifications, *MONONOKE* will stay essentially unchanged. At the time of writing, the film is not scheduled for cuts — at nearly two-and-a-quarter hours, it's among the longest animations ever made. The score — by the celebrated Joe Hisaishi, who regularly composes for Miyazaki's films and live-actioners like Takeshi Kitano's award-winning *HANNA-BI* — is also expected to be left intact. The title song, which plays in one

Continued on page 19

THE PRINCESS MONONOKE

Neil Gaiman

The master of the Sandman brings a literate voice to MONONOKE's combatants.

by PAULA
VITARIS

A couple of years ago, Disney Studios inked a deal with Japan's Studio Ghibli to bring some of the finest — and most un-Disneylike — animation to audiences worldwide: eight works by anime master Hayao Miyazaki. While seven titles will be released directly to tape and laser disc by Disney's Buena Vista Home Entertainment (with new dialogue tracks appropriate to the country of release — the U.S.-released laser discs will contain dual dialogue tracks, one in English and one with the original Japanese) the eighth film, Miyazaki's **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE**, will be given a theatrical run this summer — a rare treat for anime fans who virtually never have the opportunity to see their favorite films on the big screen.

Written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki, **PRINCESS MONONOKE** is not only Japan's most expensive animated movie, costing \$20 million to produce, but also that country's highest-grossing film ever, bringing in more than \$160 million, beating out even **TITANIC**. The Japanese Ministry of Education's Cultural Agency recognized **PRINCESS MONONOKE** with a grand prize at the Agency's first Media Arts Fair in February 1998.

PRINCESS MONONOKE should prove to be a highlight of this summer's movie season. A sweeping and mythic saga set deep in the Northern forests of Muromachi Era (1338-1573) Japan, **PRINCESS MONONOKE** depicts a society that is on the verge of major change. The film opens by plunging the viewer directly into the middle of a desperate battle: a village populated by the Emishi people is attacked by a boar driven by pain and insanity

to take on the form of a Tatari Gami, a huge monster covered with black snakes. Young Prince Ashitaka kills the monster, but his arm is badly wounded, absorbing the monster's curse. To heal his wound he travels west, arriving eventually at the periphery of a great forest, where he encounters the iron-working community of Tataru Ba, set on an island fortress. The ambitions of the founder of Tataru Ba, Lady Eboshi, have put her and her workers into an unrelenting conflict with

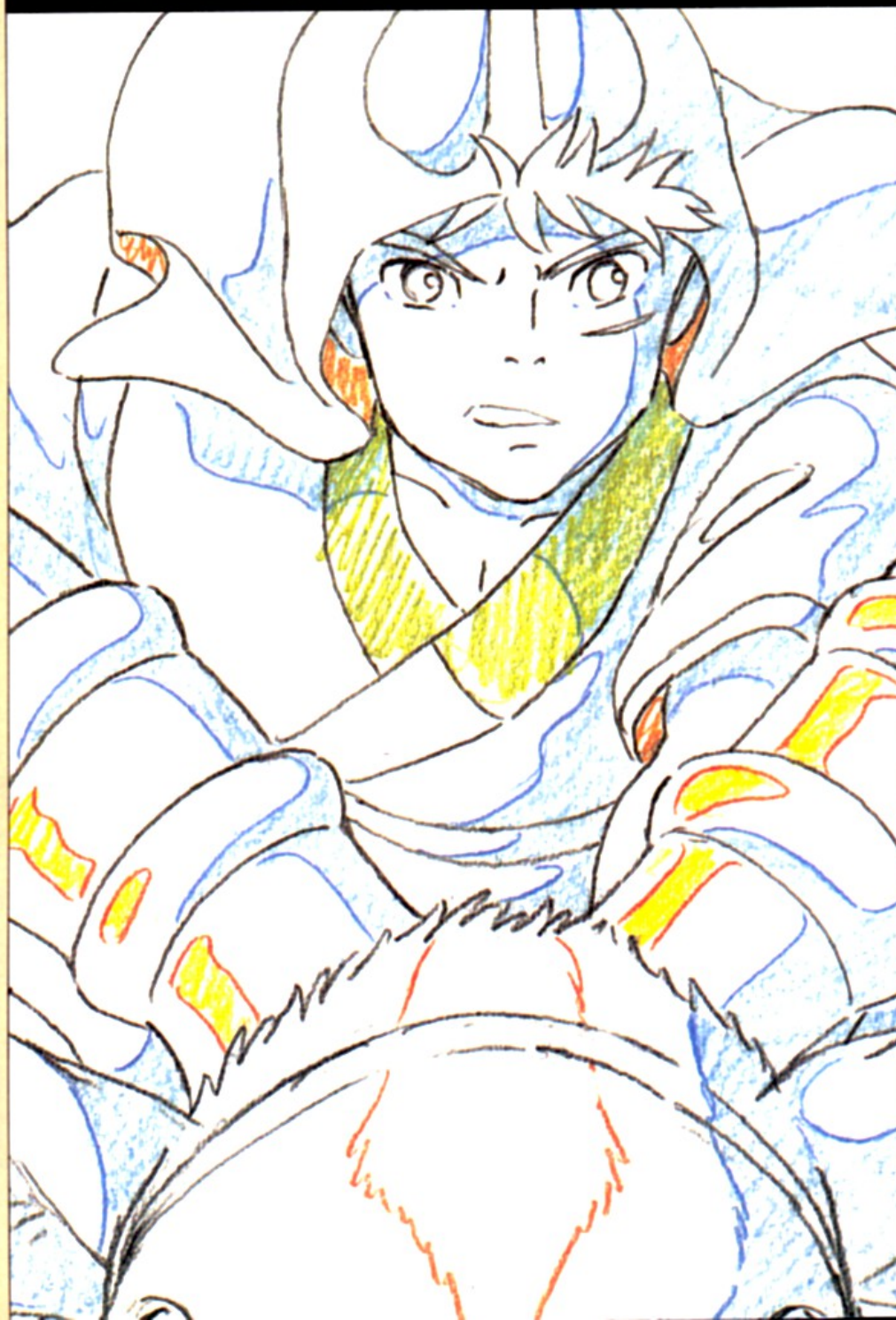
the forest's creatures, particularly the great wolf Moro and her human foster daughter, San (Princess Mononoke — Mononoke has been loosely translated as a "spirit" or "ghost"). Ashitaka is drawn into the struggle between these two strong and determined women, while continuing his search for the Deer God who may heal his wound and lift the curse.

Unlike earlier films of Miyazaki's, **PRINCESS MONONOKE** is not directed

towards children. And it is not a musical, as is much U.S.-produced, animated product, although there are songs on the soundtrack. **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE** is a complex, adult narrative that eludes a conventional, heart-warming resolution. Its characters are richly conceived and developed and there is no standardized villain to conquer. This story could take place only in Japan — it is intensely Japanese in all its details, giving the film a meticulous, colorful specificity — but its themes are timeless and universal. Miyazaki's team of animators, led by Masashi Ando, Kitaru Kosaka and Yoshifumi Kondo, have translated his vision of forest, water, iron-works, gods and monsters into exquisite visuals that can be appreciated best in a theater.

Aware of what was at stake with the theatrical release of what many consider the crowning achievement of Miyazaki's career, Disney subsidiary Miramax — which will be distributing **PRINCESS MONONOKE** to theaters — hired author Neil Gaiman (**SANDMAN**, **GOOD OMENS**, **NEVERWHERE**, and many short stories and graphic novels) to write the English-language dialogue. Like Miyazaki, Gaiman

SKETCHING OUT A HERO: Pencil rendering of Ashitaka, **PRINCESS MONONOKE**'s conflicted protagonist. Meticulous detail in the service of an epic drama.



has consistently drawn from mythology, folklore, literature and history in his own work, and his characters also live in worlds where the everyday and the fantastic — and nature and industry — intersect.

Gaiman, who has enjoyed viewing anime but admits he is no expert on the subject, knew nothing about Miramax's plans for *PRINCESS MONONOKE* until he received a call from Miramax president Harvey Weinstein, who asked him if he would be interested in writing an English-language script for the film. Gaiman's name had been suggested to Weinstein by Quentin Tarantino, whose mother was a fan of Gaiman's. Gaiman wasn't particularly interested at first, but when he was told that Leonardo DiCaprio had been approached to voice Ashitaka, he felt it was his duty as the father of a 13-year-old daughter and *TITANIC* fan to check it out. (The role eventually went to Billy Crudup.)

Gaiman finally viewed the film at a private screening while on a trip to Los Angeles. "The art work is stunning," he enthused. "You can lose yourself in it. It is genuinely mythic and the whole plot is completely and magnificently not Western. It's not Disney. There's something [different] about this little 14-year-old girl, San, sucking the bullet out of an injured wolf, blood all over her face — or just that first moment, when the demon comes out of the forest."

Gaiman quickly agreed to write the English-language script, signing on officially in April 1998. At the time no actors had been signed for the voice cast, although Claire Danes was definitely interested. Miramax provided Gaiman with a cassette and a translation of the dialogue into English-language subtitles by Studio Ghibli representative Steve Alpert, who worked closely with Gaiman during the entire process. "Steve was there to correct and amplify, and having him to talk to was terrific, because he was able to clarify anything," Gaiman noted. "What was every bit as fascinating, actually, was getting Steve to explain things to me. I'd go to him and say, 'Explain who these people are. Who are the untouchables? What are they



IN THE CAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING: Author Neil Gaiman was charged with making the cultural complexities of *MONONOKE* comprehensible to a western audience, such as in the scene where Ashitaka ritualistically cuts his hair to represent his exile from his village.

doing in here?' That was completely fascinating."

The subtitles, however, were not usable as colloquial English dialogue, and it was Gaiman's job to turn them into believable speech. "Basically, I sat there and wrote with a video on," he explained. "The main trick was trying to turn this all into words that people could say. Subtitles aren't necessarily either meant to match with the mouth movements or sound like dialogue. There's nothing about subtitles that particularly say, 'We are dialogue.' They'll give you a line like, 'Oh great beast who cannot be without a name, return to the forest and be still your wrath.' That is a literal translation and my job was to turn that into something that somebody can say without sounding stupid."

At times Gaiman found himself in the middle of a war of words between Miramax and Studio Ghibli, which had final say over the English-language script. "It was one of those weird places where I had Miramax on one side wanting one thing and Studio Ghibli on the other side wanting another thing. Ghibli wanted very much to keep the spirit of the thing and Miramax would go, 'Don't say kimono, say robe. Don't say samurai, say warrior. Could we please make this a little less Japanese?' I don't know which version of the dialogue finally got laid down. My concern was to create different and realistic voices for each character. There's a level in which that's sort of intrinsic. You can see

even from the subtitles that each of these characters speaks differently."

There were situations or actions in *THE PRINCESS MONONOKE* that would make little or no sense to Western audiences, but Japanese audiences would understand intrinsically, Gaiman would look for ways to explain these situations in his script. "Occasionally some dialogue will expand something that would have been [already] comprehensible to the Japanese. For example, before Prince Ashitaka leaves the village, he cuts his hair. The Japanese know that this means that he has now joined the ranks of the dead, he is no longer amongst the living, he is no longer a real person. He has cut his hair and walked away. Seeing that the Western audience will not know this, we've added a little explanation in dialogue to this, and we've done things like that all the way through."

Gaiman also researched Japanese mythology and customs, not only so that he could comprehend the film's story more thoroughly, but also to aid in creating the right mood through dialogue. Understanding the culture also helped in crafting dialogue for characters who do not fit Western preconceptions and stereotypes. For example, soon after Ashitaka begins his quest, he encounters a wandering monk and rather shady character named Jiko Bou. "You better remember that in Japan wandering monks were rogues," Gaiman advised. "In

Western literature a wandering monk is selfless, a miracle-working good man. You're very unlikely to have a wandering friar who is a complete and utter rogue at the bottom of everything going wrong."

Although many anime fans feel *PRINCESS MONONOKE* should have been subtitled in order to keep the original Japanese dialogue intact, Gaiman acknowledges that English dialogue is necessary to draw in the widest possible audience, since most people avoid subtitled films. "I would hope that people would simply go and see it. It's wonderful," he said. "Miramax wants this to reach the widest possible audience and so does Studio Ghibli — and I think it deserves to. I'm genuinely fascinated to see how it's going to work."

While Gaiman enjoyed his time spent bringing the magnificent world of *PRINCESS MONONOKE* to us in the West, he doesn't plan to take on similar projects in the future. "That was more or less what I said to them when I walked in after the first meeting. I said this is enormously fun, really genuinely challenging and I would never for a million pounds do anything like this again. There's something about sitting there, down at the bottom of the garden, with a video on, playing a line of dialogue over and over again, rewinding backwards and forwards in order to be able to figure out what that line would have been if the person who made the film had English as his native language and had written it that way. That was really interesting to do as an exercise one-off; I wound up filled with admiration for professional translators. It left me very happy that I'm somebody who, generally speaking, makes things up for a living. That's what I like doing, that's what I do best. The fun of it in many ways for me was the fact that it was somebody else's playground. My job wasn't telling my story, it was telling somebody else's story as cleanly and as best I could. And it's such a strange, beautiful, odd story. I was impressed by what can be done outside the Hollywood system. *PRINCESS MONONOKE* is really a remarkable piece of work." **AFQ**

DREAM DYNASTY: Studio Ghibli at work (below). The company has built upon a tradition of critically acclaimed features, from the light, engaging fantasy of *KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE* (lower left), to the tragic, thought-provoking drama of *GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES* (right).



key scene and over the end credits, will be dubbed by a "star" voice. Miramax sends regular reports to Miyazaki home-base, Studio Ghibli, and both the director and Ghibli president Toshio Suzuki have seen partial dubs of the film. Like just about everyone else on the project, they're said to be very excited by what's been done so far.

Ghibli films have appeared in the West before. The quality has varied, ranging from the appalling *WARRIORS OF THE WIND*, New World Video's hack-job of Miyazaki's 1984 *NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF*

THE WIND, through to the generally praised French version of *PORCO ROSSO* (1992) with Jean Reno. However, the releases emerging from Miramax and Buena Vista, both owned by Disney, give films like *MONONOKE* and *KIKI* a prominence unheard of for animes in the West.

Despite the Disney connection, Martin confirms *MONONOKE* will be marketed entirely separately from lighter, more family-friendly Ghibli fare like *KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE*. He believes Miramax, which distributes titles ranging from *CINEMA PARA-*

DISIO to *HEAVENLY CREATURES*, is the ideal outlet for *PRINCESS MONONOKE*. "Ten years ago," he pointed out, "people were asking, 'What's that?'" about *IL POSTINO*. Now it's known worldwide. Ever since I started working on *MONONOKE*, people have come up to me and said, Can this ever work? Can you get audiences interested in an animation that's not a children's' film? My answer is that it's the philosophy of my bosses, Bob and Harvey Weinstein, that we have the guts to do what no other film company will do!"

AFQ

ZIP-A-DEE-DO-DON'T: DISNEY'S MISSING SONG OF THE SOUTH

DAN
SCAPPEROTTI

Walt Disney had long been an admirer of the *Tales of Uncle Remus* by Joel Chandler Harris and had originally planned to make *SONG OF THE SOUTH* as a fully animated feature. To cut costs during the war years, Disney had begun to stray from his sole dependence on animated characters and dabble in the use of live action footage starting with *THREE CABALLEROS*. With *SONG OF THE SOUTH* in 1946, the studio released its first feature that was primarily a live action story. It was supplemented with three animated tales narrated by Uncle Remus, played by black actor James Baskett, who won a special Academy Award for his performance. The movie proved to be a major transitional phase in the studio's history, leading the way to *TREASURE ISLAND* — Disney's first all live-action feature — four years later. While reviews of the time generally hailed the film, critics were almost unanimous in their praise for Brer Rabbit's cartoon adventures, while less enthusiastic about the live action sequences.

In casting young Bobby Driscoll as Johnny and little Luana Patten as the sharecropper's daughter who lives down the lane, Disney created the studio's first contract players. Over the next several years, Patten and Driscoll would appear in several Disney films, both together and separately. Driscoll was given the role of young Jim Hawkins in the studio's adaptation of *TREASURE ISLAND* and would be the voice of Peter Pan.

The story of *SONG*

OF THE SOUTH is as picturesque as the tales it frames. When young Johnny's parents separate, he is brought to live on his grandmother's plantation. Feeling abandoned and isolated, the boy runs away. As he walks down a country lane, Johnny spots Uncle Remus entertaining some black children by a campfire with a tale of Brer Rabbit, a sly critter who uses his brains to best Brer Bear and Brer Fox. The old man spots the youngster hiding behind a tree. Suggesting they run away together, Remus takes the boy to his cabin where he tells him the story of when Brer Rabbit wanted to run away from his troubles too. The tales, says Remus, are set in a time when "the critters was closer to the folks, and the folks was closer to the critters, and it was better all around. It was one of those Zip-a-dee-doo-dah days." He launches into the Academy Award-winning *Zip-a-dee Doo-dah*. One of the most memorable images in animated films is the sight of James Baskett walking down a path singing to animated birds and ani-

mals along the way.

Eventually, he comes to Brer Rabbit, closing up his briar-patch home. The wily rabbit has decided to leave his troubles behind and sets off. Suddenly the rabbit finds himself dangling from a pole, a trap set by Brer Fox who spots him from his hillside den. Sharpened ax in hand Brer Fox races to get his prize. Meanwhile, dumb Brer Bear has ambled along and Brer Rabbit talks him into taking his place. He barely has time to escape before Brer Fox arrives on the scene.

Later, Uncle Remus spins another yarn, this time the tale of the tar baby. This is another scheme cooked up by Brer Fox — only this time, it works. Hopping along, Brer Rabbit salutes the tar baby, set up along side the road by his nemesis. Getting into an argument with the unresponsive critter, Brer Rabbit is enmeshed in the soft tar and captured by Brer Fox and Brer Bear. While the pair argue on how to dispose of their prisoner, Brer Rabbit begs them not to throw him into a nearby briar patch. Of course, that's exactly what

they do, allowing Brer Rabbit to escape.

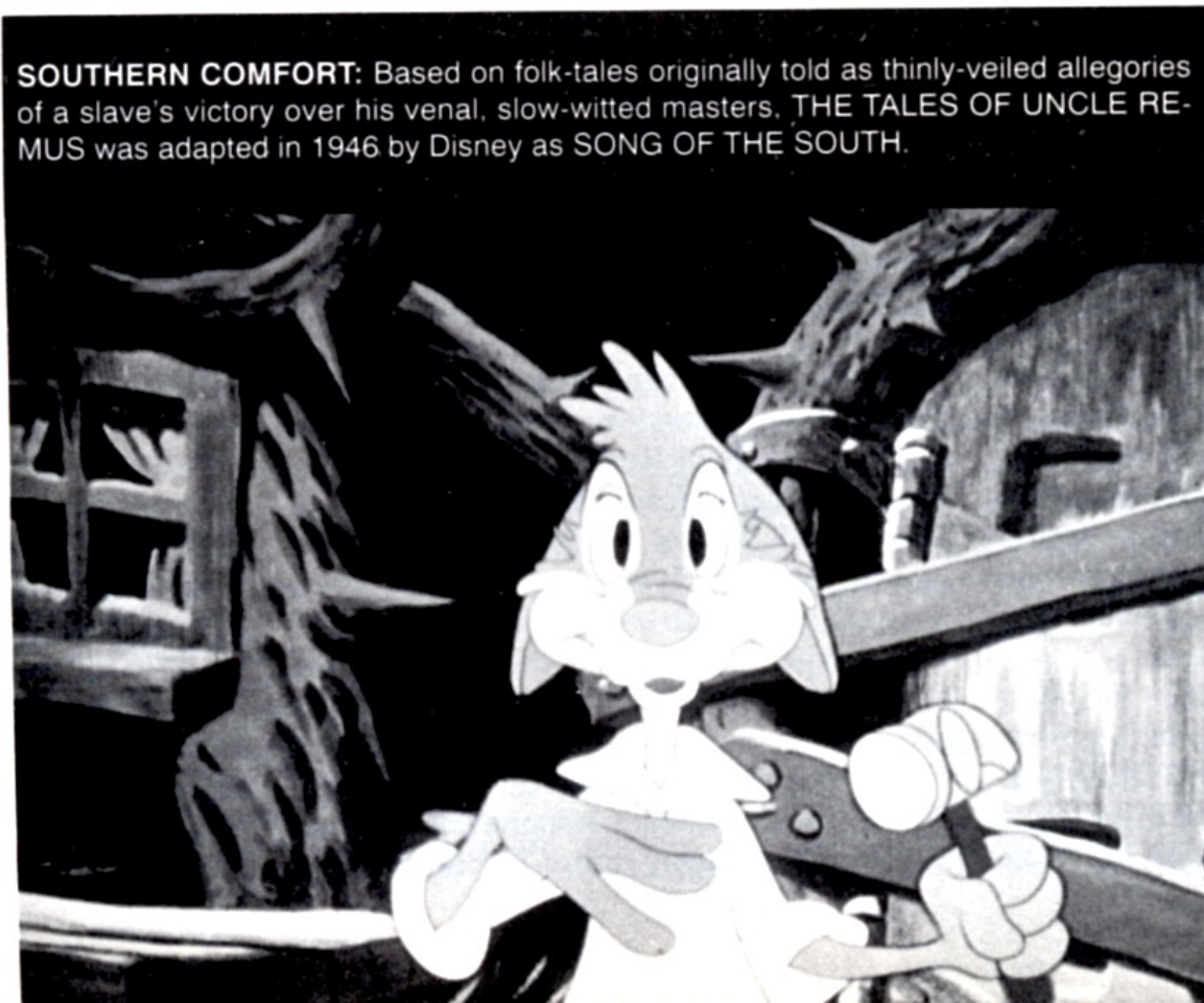
The last of the three animated Remus stories finds Brer Rabbit tied to a stake in Brer Fox's cave about to become dinner. The rabbit starts laughing and, playing for time, tells the inquisitive fox and bear about his laughing place. Intrigued they allow themselves to be taken to this laughing place only to be assaulted by a hive of bees, with Brer Rabbit once again getting out of their clutches.

The live-action sequences were shot first at the Goldwyn Studios. Actor James Baskett was filmed on real sets painted to look like cartoon backgrounds. The first problem to plague the animators was the transitional scene from Baskett relating the story with a rear projected background to the actual set. The actor was to be shot on a set that dissolved into a cartoon world but the animators couldn't figure out how to work the changeover. Disney himself visited the set and suggested that instead of a full shot of Baskett, they have him sitting by a fire, lighting only his face. When the actor said "Zip" the background behind him would suddenly turn bright blue and he would be outside in the cartoon world. It worked brilliantly.

The combination of cartoon and live action is amazing. At one point Uncle Remus goes fishing along with Brer Frog. Both man and amphibian pull out their pipes. Uncle Remus leans over and lights the frog's pipe. He then twirls his fishing pole and lets the animated line fly across the pond, dropping into the water.

The real show stop-

SOUTHERN COMFORT: Based on folk-tales originally told as thinly-veiled allegories of a slave's victory over his venal, slow-witted masters, *THE TALES OF UNCLE REMUS* was adapted in 1946 by Disney as *SONG OF THE SOUTH*.



pers come at the finale as the kids skip along a dirt road singing "Zip-a-dee Doo-dah" while Brer Rabbit, birds, butterflies and a host of other critters join them. The live-action pet dog watches as a cartoon frog hops all around him, his eyes clearly following the amphibian as it moves. Later the pooch is racing down the path with a cartoon turtle that runs alongside him. As the kids skip past a pond, a frog leaps across a pool and hits the water with a live-action splash.

The three animated characters were all voiced by black actors. James Baskett himself played Brer Fox. Brer Rabbit was played by Johnny Lee, who would later take over the role of attorney Algernon J. Calhoun on the *Amos and Andy* radio program, and stay with the character when it made the transition to television. Nicodemus Stewart voiced the dimwitted Brer Bear, and would also move into television as Lightning on *Amos and Andy*.

For *SONG OF THE SOUTH*, the supervising animators chose to break away from the tradition where several artists worked on the same scene, each character being drawn by an individual animator. Animator Ollie Johnston explained, "We each did all the characters in the scene because they all related so closely, and they're always in contact with each other. The character rela-

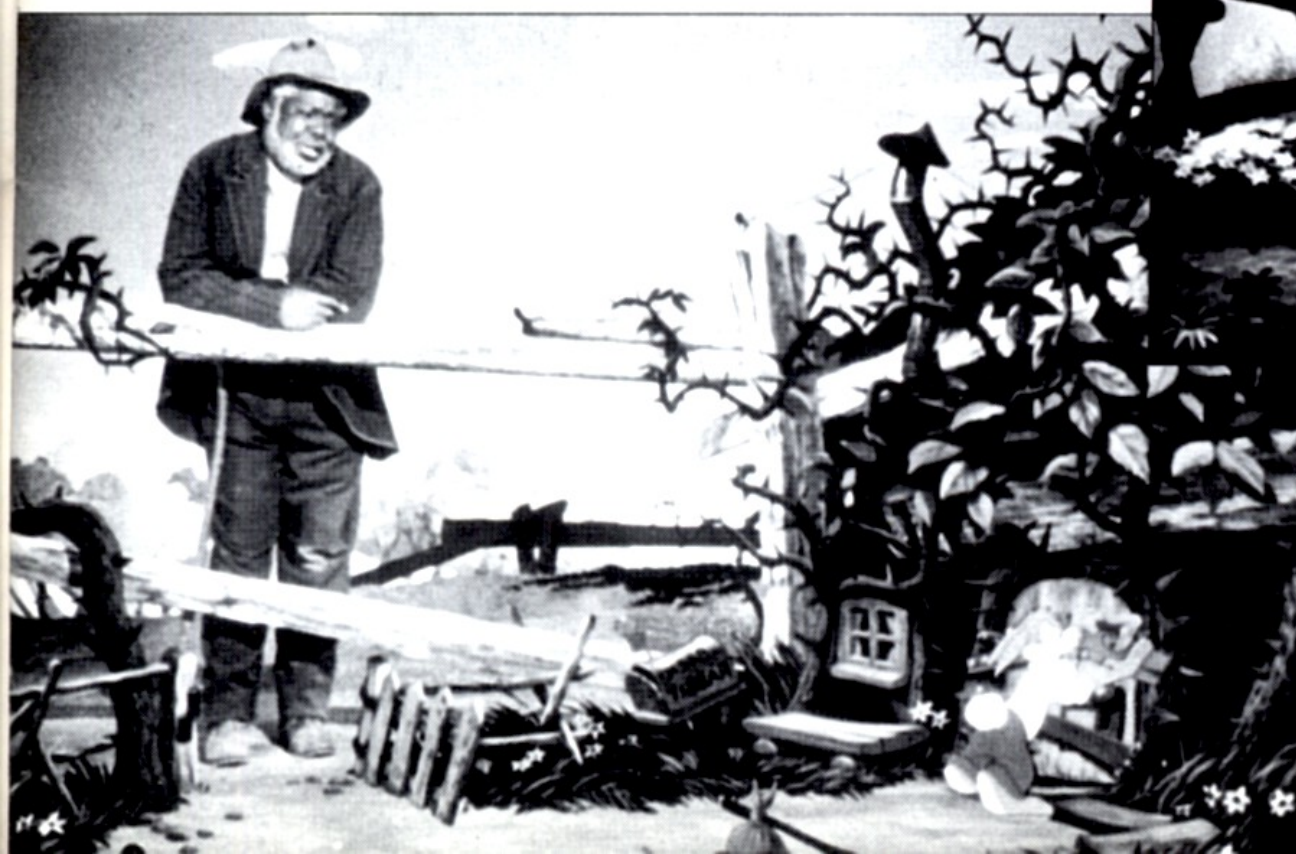
tionship was really the top of the creative art. It's the two characters working together, who really communicate with the audience. They define each other's personalities."

The film became one of the studio's most controversial films. Even on its original release, liberal newspapers complained that the film depicted blacks as servants and therefore fostered a negative stereotype. (One wonders if they felt they should have been portrayed as plantation owners in a story that takes place in the antebellum South.) In 1970, Disney announced that the film would be permanently

pulled from circulation. However, a year later, *SONG OF THE SOUTH* was reissued to theatres. While the studio has released all of its animated films to video, *SONG OF THE SOUTH* remains elusive, although it has appeared on laser disc in Japan. (Presumably, racial sensibilities are less potent and political correctness less an issue in Asia.) Interest-

ingly, the laser has subtitles only during the songs.

For all its charm and technical wizardry, the film has been reissued only twice. Perhaps now that Disney's other missing-in-action feature, *THE BLACK CAULDRON*, has finally found its way to home video, it's time for *SONG OF THE SOUTH* to again see light of a projector's lamp. AFQ



CELS AND POLITICS: A technical landmark when it was first released, Disney's *SONG OF THE SOUTH* has suffered perpetually from the accusation that it depicts a stereotypical view of blacks.

PUTTING ON THE PJS

Synchronicity and a love of THE THUNDERBIRDS brings Ron Howard, Eddie Murphy, and Will Vinton together on Fox's edgy, urban anime series.

by LAURA
SCHIEF

The whole thing started with a prank Tom Hanks and Kevin Bacon pulled on Ron Howard back in 1994. While working on the set of APOLLO 13, astronaut actors Bacon and Hanks told director Howard they'd found some incredible footage for him to incorporate into the film about a moon mission gone wrong. Excited, Howard followed the actors into a viewing room to check it out. But instead of finding the historical space flight footage he was led to expect, Hanks and Bacon showed Howard an episode of THE THUNDERBIRDS, the '60s sci-fi TV show with the trippy marionettes. The director loved it. He thought it was cool. He tried, after APOLLO 13 wrapped, to put a deal together for a similar show, but was unsuccessful.

Independently of Ron Howard, comic actor Eddie Murphy also happened to watch an episode of THE THUNDERBIRDS. He got the same idea: why not make an edgy, cool, prime time show with puppets? Murphy was interested in returning to voice acting, having played Gumby on SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE back in the early '80s. Murphy's new show concept was originally along the lines of Punch & Judy or THE

HONEYMOONERS, about a quarreling, married couple living in a housing project. In fact, right from the start, Murphy referred to his idea as THE PJ'S, which stood for PUNCH & JUDY. (Much later, this would be changed to stand for "the projects.") Murphy figured he could get away with showing more extreme, over-the-top behavior on the show if the action was performed by puppets rather than people. He mentioned the idea to Imagine Films' producer Brian Grazer, who mentioned it to Ron Howard, who was eager to take another stab at the idea. Imagine's vice-president of development, Nena Rodrigue, got the ball rolling by contacting her long-time friends, producers Steve Tompkins and Larry Wilmore.

Steve Tompkins, a Harvard grad with a degree in English Lit, and Larry Wilmore, a former stand-up comic, had met as young staff writers on Fox's IN LIVING COLOR. The two hit it off right away and developed some Emmy Award-winning scripts for the show as well as a habit of finishing each other's sentences. After IN LIVING COLOR, Wilmore went on to co-produce SISTER, SISTER and THE FRESH PRINCE OF BEL AIR, while Tompkins became co-

executive producer of THE SIMPSONS. Their busy schedules prevented the friends from re-teaming, but they were determined to some day produce a show together. When Imagine's Rodrigue approached them to discuss Murphy's PJ'S idea, the duo quickly found the time.

Recalled Wilmore, "In August of '97, we met with Eddie Murphy in his dressing room, where he was doing DOCTOR DOLITTLE. He pitched this idea to us of a puppet show in the projects, and we thought it was hilarious. So Steve and I started pitching ideas back to him, and he started laughing! And then we're thinking to ourselves, 'Man, we're making Eddie Murphy laugh!'"

Tompkins interjected, "It was like the greatest moment in my life, getting a laugh from Eddie Murphy!"

"And so we kind of clicked, you know," continued Wilmore, "and Steve and I started to develop and design the characters along with the Will Vinton Studios."

Recognized as one of the foremost practitioners of dimensional character animation in the world, Will Vinton is the creator of the trademarked stop-motion process known as Claymation. He has won numer-



AT HOME IN THE PROJECTS: More than just a building superintendent, Thurgood Stubbs (voiced by Eddie Murphy) has turned the dilapidated structure he tends to into the love of his life.

ous Academy Awards and Oscar nominations, but is probably best known as the originator of some of the most successful commercial characters of all time: The California Raisins. Back in 1986, the Claymation raisins danced into millions of homes across the nation to the tune of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine," while the California Raisin Advisory Board boogied all the way to the bank. The filmmaker's Will Vinton Studios is also known for its M&Ms ads — which feature the talking chocolates that won't melt in your hand — and a Nissan spot that stars a Barbie doll who's rescued from her boring life with Ken when G.I. Joe shows up to whisk her off in a toy car. The two spots won top honors in 1996 from *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *TV Guide*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and several others. The executive producers of THE PJ'S were confident that Will Vinton could make magic happen with their show — television's first stop-motion prime-time series.

"[Will Vinton Studios is] really interested in television, particularly prime time," said Vinton. "The company's always been oriented to slightly adult animation. Not x-rated, but with an adult sensibility. In some ways, that didn't exist five, six, seven years ago. It didn't exist at all in the '80s. People saw animation as kids' stuff. It was for children. With WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT, I think that started to change. Now there's THE SIMPSONS, KING OF THE HILL, SOUTH PARK. The time is right for THE PJ'S.

Television is where we've always really wanted to be." Thus, Vinton accepted the job and got to work with Tompkins and Wilmore, fleshing out the look of THE PJ'S main character, a superintendent of a tenement in the projects.

Said Wilmore, "We went through this intensive character-design, month-long period where we just went over many drawings and different scenarios and layouts of what the superintendent might look like, what the world might look like. We went from everything from stick figures to full-size marionette puppets."

"Very abstract blobs of wiry arms, clear to incredibly realistic representations," added Tompkins.

On his desk, Tompkins fans out several drawings of early interpretations that were rejected. It looks like a menagerie of circus sideshow freaks. There's one superintendent who resembles Fat Albert. Another looks like Wesley Snipes from BLADE. One is sort of triangular, like Japanese anime. Another one, which came very close to being chosen, has a disturbing resemblance to the Frankenstein monster: rectangular head, buzz cut. Scary.

Said Tompkins, "It's a process where you get a design and you pick out the one element or the two elements that you feel are right and then they go back and they do another design and incorporate the other things. We pick and choose from various other sketches and put them together. Somehow at our core, Larry and I both, be-



MR. STUBBS' NEIGHBORHOOD: The full cast of the THE PJ'S (above right) captures the dizzying diversity of life in the projects. **BELOW:** Sanchez (left, voice by Pepe Serna), Mrs. Avery (center, Ja'net DuBois), and Haiti Lady (Cheryl Francis Harrington) renew old animosities.



ing on the same wavelength, we already had the tone of the show in our head: the kind of way we write, the kinds of jokes and atmosphere we wanted to create."

"We both felt it should be a combination of THE SIMPSONS meets IN LIVING COLOR," said Wilmore.

"The one [drawing] that was the right tone kind of went off like a tuning fork in us," said Tompkins, "and we knew that was the kind of level of comedy we wanted to work at."

The look they finally settled on for the superintendent has a high forehead, wide cheeks, a pot belly, and a shock of gray hair that could give Don King a run for his money. The super was henceforth christened Thurgood Stubbs. He was then given a wife named Muriel.

"I had this idea of the *sweat suit*," said Tompkins. "They originally drew Muriel in a *dress*! I said, 'No one wears *dresses* anymore! When you go to the airport or a bus station or the supermarket, every woman of her age is in a matching sweat suit of turquoise or pink or something like that. *That* is what Muriel wears!'"

Once the look of the characters was chosen, the choice to use stop motion, rather than computer animation, was obvious. "With THE PJ'S," said Will Vinton,



"we wanted a really textured, gritty style. Lots and lots of detail. That's a little hard to achieve with computer animation. We also kind of liked the retro style of stop motion animation. And the style of animation itself — it's really hard to get that sort of *snap* to the movements, the gestures, that you get with stop motion. A lot of computer animation, the hand gestures aren't as sharp. They're kind of fuzzy. We wanted the kind of punctuation you get with stop motion."

While the talented folks at Will Vinton Studios got down to the business of creating the characters, Tompkins and Wilmore wrote a three-minute demo script that was going to be used to sell the project to Fox. "We felt Thurgood was kind of like a Fred Sanford, George Jefferson, Archie Bunker type," said Wilmore. "You know, a little grumble-y, but he really is a softy at heart. And we felt that we really needed something to hang everything that he does *on*. And we felt the best thing we can do is..."

"To make the building his first love!" interrupted Tompkins.

WILMORE: It even goes beyond the love for his wife, actually. He loves the building more than anything!

TOMPKINS: He's unable to communicate

any affection for any other human being, so what he does is transfer it on to the building. If he *likes* you...

WILMORE: He'll fix your toilet!

TOMPKINS: Exactly. But he'll abuse you the whole while!

"He's a passionate superintendent," continued Wilmore, picking up the conversational baton. "He cares passionately about it. So, we thought that was a pretty good hook. And the other hook we decided to do was, the projects, for people on the outside especially, can be a very dangerous place. And so we felt like, the people who live *in* the projects don't see the same dangers as the people that live *outside* the projects. So we wanted to treat it as happenstance. You know, like, it's really part of the background — we just accept it. So, it gave us another comic twist to play off of. Where like, when danger happens, people treat it like it's just every day reality. So we tried to get those two things across in the demo. As well as what the look of the show might be, how the puppets move and all that stuff."

The three-minute demo finds Thurgood lying in bed, unable to sleep. It's not the gunshots outside that are keeping him awake. Nor is it the low-flying helicopters, wailing police sirens, or loud domestic dis-

putes. It's a dripping faucet. Thurgood gets up to attend to the leaky pipes and is confronted by a crack addict, a buck-toothed teenager, a purveyor of stolen goods, and his wife Muriel, who insists on recording every detail in her journal. Eddie Murphy lent his vocal chords to play Thurgood in the demo, while Larry Wilmore voiced Muriel.

"The first time we worked with Eddie Murphy," recalls Wilmore, "we had to go down to Miami. He was shooting the film *HOLY MAN*. We were recording [his voice track for] the demo and we didn't know what to expect. This was our first test — we were going to work with this guy, a big mega-star. And he came in kinda quiet and he was looking at some of the sketches."

TOMPKINS: The other thing was that we were bringing him Thurgood. He didn't *know* Thurgood.

WILMORE: He didn't even know what it looked like at that point.

TOMPKINS: We were like, is this gonna match what he has in *his* mind?

"We didn't know if he would even *like* the character we created," said Wilmore. "We didn't know if we made him too gruff, or whatever. So Eddie came in and we

talked to him a little bit about it and he took some time and he looked at the puppet. So looking at it, he kind of got an idea what he wanted to do with the voice. He played around a little bit and we started recording it and we were like, 'Oh man, this is great.'"

"He almost *immediately* found the voice," Tompkins said. "Initially, when we first met Eddie, and also every [other] time we go to record him, he tends to focus on the gruffer side. I think that's more fun for him to play with the gruffer side of the character. But eventually, as he settles into the role, the softer sides, or the quirkier sides, or the more childish sides — Thurgood has very childish behavior sometimes — will start to come out. And that's when you really get rich performances."

Said Wilmore, "When you get somebody like Eddie who comes in and delivers this great performance, it's *great* because you can write *anything* and you know he can fly with it. You can throw almost any kind of thing at him, and he'll do something with it and give us something we didn't even expect, which is nice."

"He almost always hits the ground running," agreed Tompkins.

"Eddie can be very improvisational," Wilmore added. "He can just fly with his performance and then they just animate to what he's done. It gives you a lot of freedom."

After the voices were recorded, a story board was drawn, filmed, and cut together, creating a timing aid known as an animatic. Then came the actual process of animating.

"The word animator means somebody who gives *life*," said episode director Dave Bleiman. "That's what an animator does. He gives the appearance of being alive, and to do that, you have to be a performer. The animation puppet is a dead thing. All the gesture and the body language, everything that actually comes out in the character, is done by the animators. The animator has to know in their mind exactly what that character is doing, down to moving their finger, and very purposely gets them to do that. It isn't spontaneous in the way that someone might decide in the middle of a frame that the character is going to do something crazy. But through the expansion of time, they can be spontaneous with gestures, motion, movements and nuances of the character. Up until the moment they shoot it, it's totally up to that particular animator, director, writer's vision. Usually the director and the animator will go over a shot, we'll look at the surrounding shots, we'll go through the emotion of a particular shot and talk about that. We'll talk about the character's motivation. Quite often the director will actually act out the shot for the animator. You find yourself, as an animation director, spending a great deal of your day looking really foolish. You're basically acting like a cartoon."



SIDEWALK TYKES: Calvin (left, voiced by Crystal Scales) and Juicy (right, Michele Morgan) are the kids running rampant in Thurgood Stubbs' building. The Olson twins wouldn't last a second with these two.

While the demo was being produced, Wilmore and Tompkins wrote a pilot episode about a movie theater:

TOMPKINS: In the first episode, Thurgood wants to renovate an old movie theater that's been abandoned in the neighborhood as a way to bring the community together again, give them a place to go on Saturday night. Endless complications result.

WILMORE: He forgets to get movies for it, so he buys the movies off the street and they turn out to be...

TOMPKINS: Porno movies! So he ends up then deciding to burn the theater down!

WILMORE: Then he gets arrested for burning the theater down.

TOMPKINS: But in the end, he brought the community together, because they all came together to post his bail!

In writing the show, many colorful characters were created. There's Mrs. Avery, a cranky old lady with a shotgun, who's based on Wilmore's actual neighbor. Papa Hudson is a guy who's too fat to leave his apartment. Sanchez is an old man

who speaks through a voice synthesizer and is, according to Tompkins, "the most boring man on the face of the planet." There's a voodoo practitioner Thurgood calls Haiti Lady, and a former crack addict named Smokey who looks scary, but sounds about as ferocious as *SESAME STREET*'s Elmo.

The pilot script, together with the demo, was enough to convince Fox they had a potential winner on their hands. The network committed to 13 episodes. Now the *real* work could begin. From beginning to end, it takes about nine months to produce each 30-minute episode of *THE PJ'S*. On a good week, a single animator can be expected to complete roughly 30 seconds of film. Will Vinton Studios produces four episodes simultaneously, drawing from a talent pool of approximately 85 people dedicated specifically to the show.

"It's an incredible challenge," Vinton concedes. "Especially from a sheer production standpoint. There's so much material. It's unbelievable that we're on schedule and on budget."

While Vinton & company toil in Portland, Oregon, Steve Tompkins and Larry Wilmore work with the voice actors in Los Angeles. Said Tompkins, "To the black performer community, we've got the stellar cast of all time." Playing Muriel, Eddie Murphy's better half, is *WAITING TO EXHALE*'s Loretta Devine. Muriel's sister Bebe is voiced by Jenifer Lewis, who

played Tina Turner's mother in *WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT*. Ja'net DuBois, who played Willona on *GOOD TIMES*, is Mrs. Avery. Up-and-comer James Black plays Turnell, the man with the hook-up to anything the black market can buy. (Black will also appear in Eddie Murphy's movie *LIFE*, which will be released this year.) Shawn Michael Howard, who plays Smokey, currently has recurring roles on both *NYPD BLUE* and *ALLY MCBEAL*. Wilmore's brother Marc, who was on *IN LIVING COLOR*, is a writer for the show and plays a character called Walter, a parole officer who's one of Thurgood's best friends. Pepe Serna plays Sanchez, the man with the voice synthesizer. The Haiti Lady is voiced by Cheryl Francis Harrington. And Michael Paul Chan plays Jimmy — a Korean who thinks he's black.

"Crystal Scales and Michele Morgan are two very talented young ladies who do the *boys* on the show, Calvin and Juicy," said Wilmore. "The voices are *unbelievable*. They are so talented."

"They are two of *the* most talented voice performers I have ever worked with," agreed Tompkins, "and I worked with *Nancy Cartwright*, who played Bart, you know? I also worked with the woman who played *BABE*, Christine Cavanaugh. I've seen some *great* women who do great voices, but I gotta say, I think our two are the best."

"Kevin Michael Richardson is another actor who's going to make a name for himself," Wilmore enthused. "He has an *amaz-*

Continued on page 29

WORD ON THE STREET: Thurgood consults with Turnell, black-marketeer extraordinaire (although the goods he purveys never seem to help the perpetually challenged super).



The age of FOAMATION

The stop motion character "puppets" on *THE PJ'S* are not made of the traditional clay, but of pliable foam latex, spawning the new term: *foamation*.

Explained *THE PJ'S* episodic director Dave Bleiman, "Foamation is a word that was made up for this particular series. Foam latex lasts longer than clay and it's more durable. In the kind of environment where you have to turn out [episodes] quick enough to get them all on the air, you don't want to have to go through the arduous task of animating clay, which involves a lot of sculpture. It's easier to move and position foam latex puppets, whereas Claymation involves repositioning of the hands and sculpting during production.

"In foamation, the sculpting is done up front when the puppet is created and the animator doesn't have to sculpt. We use a combination that I've never seen before on any other show. The characters' lips are somewhat pliable. They're made of wax. The head is made of hard foam and the lips are made of wax. And there's more than one set of lips. Each character has many different mouths for the different sounds and expressions that they do. You simply take one off and put another one on. It's very much like a very complicated Mister Potato Head. That's called replacement animation. Different parts are actually pre-made and replaced. But this is a special take on replacement animation because the lips are flexible, made of wax, so you're not totally stuck with the pre-made lips. You can twist portions of the lips to make more of a smile, for example. Animators have been known to cut the lips in half, or open the mouth by creating a bigger space between the top and bottom lips. You still can't go from a big "oh" mouth to a big "ee" mouth with one set of lips: you still have to replace them — but certain sounds can be done with one mouth."

APQ

Laura Schiff

When the folks at Imagine Entertainment and Touchstone Television were looking for someone to help make animation history, they went straight to the man whose proficiency with stop-motion animation is legend, the guy who actually made dried fruit look hip: Will Vinton. Recognized as one of the foremost practitioners of dimensional character animation in the world, Vinton leaped at the chance to work magic on *THE PJ'S*, television's first stop-motion prime time series.

Grandson of a former Oregon governor, Vinton became interested in stop-motion during college at the University of Berkeley, CA. Two years after graduation, having honed his filmmaking skills on various commercial productions, Vinton created his first professional clay animation project, *CLOSED MONDAYS*, in 1975 with a college buddy named Bob Gardiner. He recalled, "I was greatly influenced by Eli Noyse's monochrome clay animation in the early '60s, but I hadn't really seen anybody use full color and full sculpting techniques. *CLOSED MONDAYS* was designed as a way for me to show off the various techniques for making sculptures come to life. I coined the term *Claymation*. I knew at that time that it was something very magical and very special."

CLOSED MONDAYS won the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film. Riding on this success, the filmmaker gave birth to Will Vinton Studios, a full-fledged production company specializing in dimensional animation.

Over the past 20 years, the studio has amassed an impressive body of work. It's received, under Vinton's guidance, Oscar nominations for the short films *RIP VAN WINKLE*, *CREATION*, and *THE GREAT COGNITO*, and for the special visual effects in the Disney feature *RETURN TO OZ*. There have also been hundreds of international awards for such short films as *LEGACY*, *THE LITTLE PRINCE*, *MARTIN*, *THE COBBLER* and *DINOSAUR*. In 1985, Vinton pro-

THE PJ'S Will Vinton Studios



GRAPE EXPECTATIONS: The California Raisins, born in 1986, became a pop sensation in the U.S., and nearly doomed Will Vinton Studios to an undeserved reputation for kitsch.

duced and directed *THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN*, the first feature-length Claymation® film.

The following year, the California Raisins took the world by storm and put Will Vinton Studios on the map. But Vinton was concerned the studio would be pigeon-holed by the Raisins'

success. At the time, Claymation® was solely thought of as a novelty, notable only for its kitsch factor. No one seemed to remember the studio's exemplary work on *MARK TWAIN*. Mused Vinton, "It was kind of funny because despite all of the awards we had gotten, everybody thought of Claymation® as

sticking tennis shoes and gloves, arms and legs onto fruit."

A change of focus was clearly in order. In 1987, an Emmy for Outstanding Animated Program was awarded to *A CLAYMATION CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION*. Another Emmy was won for Outstanding Special Effects on a Claymation®/live action sequence on the hit series *MOONLIGHTING*. Will Vinton Studios went on to immortalize other celebrities in clay, including Michael Jackson and *HOME IMPROVEMENT*'s Tim Allen.

The studio made a high profile leap into computer animation with an ad campaign for M&M Candy in 1995. The long-running series of TV commercials, which feature the talking chocolates, prompted *USA Today* to name the spots the "Most Popular and Best Performed [of 1996]."

Lightning struck twice in 1996 when Will Vinton Studios unveiled a TV commercial for the Nissan 300ZX. Called "Toys," the stop-motion ad had a G.I. Joe doll upping his coolness quotient with a toy Nissan (the logical outcome: Barbie as a traveling companion). All of this was set against the strains of Van Halen's cover of The Kinks' *You Really Got Me*. Audiences went wild for the ad, which was named "Best Spot Of 1996" by *Time Magazine* and "Coolest Spot of 1996" by *Rolling Stone*.

Vinton is reluctant to discuss his current projects in development, though he confirmed that the studio is doing a Fox sketch comedy special called *KLAY TV* that features puppets of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. There's also a feature film project called *CLIFF DAMAGE*, co-produced with Mel Gibson's *ICON Productions*. While the filmmaker says Will Vinton Studios will continue to focus on prime time television in the years to come, they're also moving into location-based entertainment. There's a 3-D M&M's movie that will be showcased at a Las Vegas pavilion, and plans to produce other 3-D projects for various theme parks.

AFQ

Laura Schiff

ing array of voices! He's just *really*, really strong. He can give you something different every time."

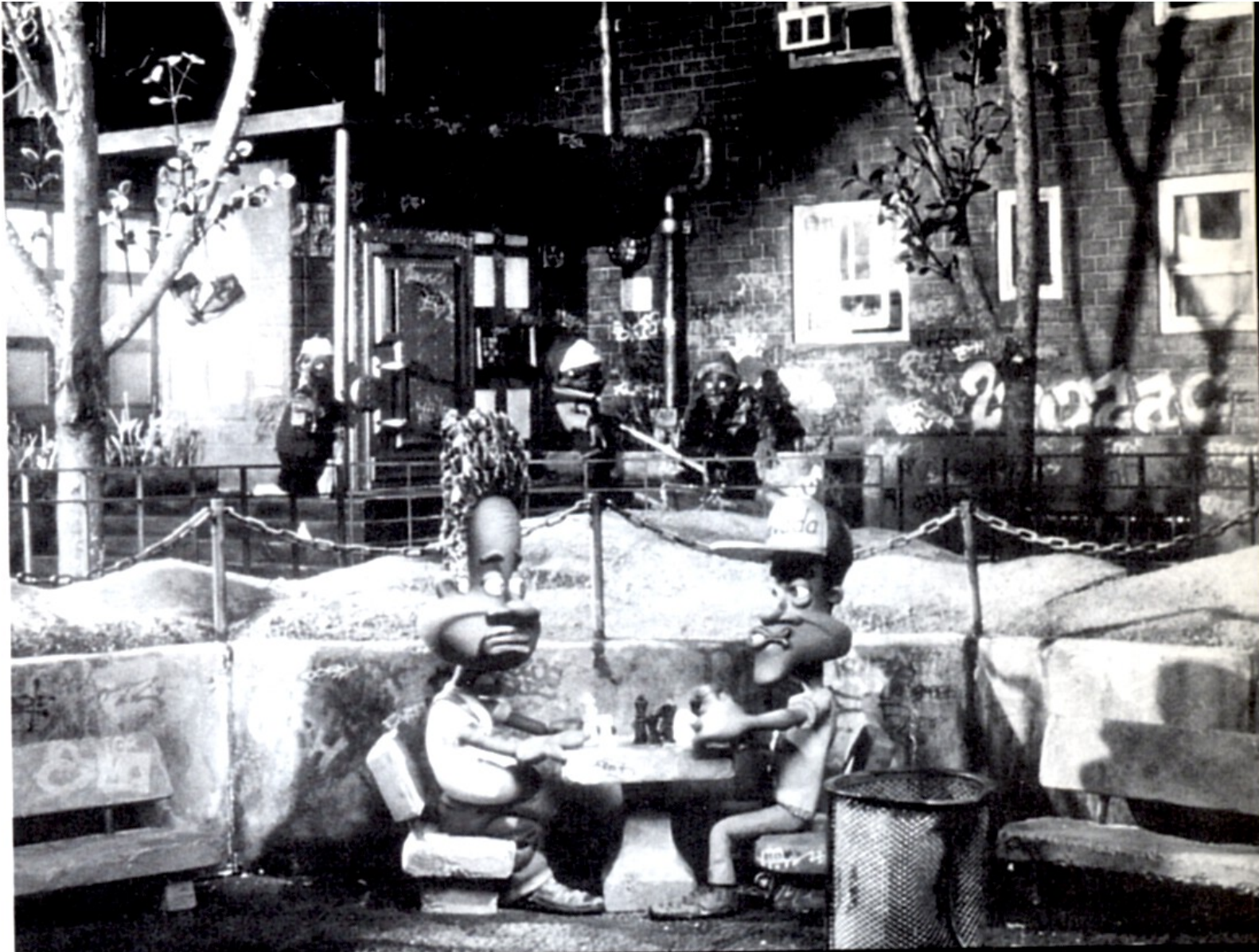
Episodes of *THE PJ'S* typically find Thurgood trying to do something to improve somebody's life and having it backfire on him, as in the pilot episode. The subtext of the show contains African American humor, for example naming streets Al Sharpton Boulevard or Alvin Ailey Alley. Instead of using four-letter swear words, Thurgood will often say something like "Halle-Berry-lujah!" But *THE PJ'S* isn't like other TV comedies about the African American experience. This isn't *GOOD TIMES*, in which everyone's trying to get out of the projects and into *THE JEFFERSONS'* exclusive high-rise apartment.

Said Tompkins, "One of the great liberties that the *premise* of *THE PJ'S* gave us, by focusing on the superintendent and his wife, is that they've got an apartment and a job *for life*. They're not going anywhere. So it's not about them struggling to make their rent or making ends meet or anything like that. So poverty — the *real* implications of poverty? — never hit home. Everybody's got food, everybody's got clothes."

"The show's done from a satirical standpoint," said Wilmore. "In *our* show, poverty is more like the principal at a Catholic school. It'll whack you on the hand. You feel oppressed by it and everything, but you know eventually you'll be all right."

"We do get our fair share of crack jokes," Tompkins said. "And that's rightfully so. We've had crack in this country for nearly 20 years now and nobody says anything about it, you know? It's about time."

The show also pokes fun at the faceless bureaucrats at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a government agency that boasts they're "Keeping People In Projects Since 1965." The bottom line:



THEY CALL IT HOME: The miniature sets of *THE PJ'S* are built with a breathtaking level of detail that brings a dose of reality to the stylized design of the lead characters.

Tompkins and Wilmore aren't afraid of getting lost in a glut of animated product such as *SOUTH PARK* and *KING OF THE HILL*. There's nothing on television now that looks like *THE PJ'S* and nothing else that takes quite the same look at inner city life.

Steve Tompkins and Larry Wilmore hope to keep writing *THE PJ'S* for many years to come. Their aim? Nothing short of world domination. Or, barring that, they at least want to conquer Fox's mostly male demographic of viewers ages 18-49.

"When I was growing up," remembers Wilmore, "*SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE* was

the biggest thing in the world. We talked about it every Monday, what they did on *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*, because it was so outrageous. Ten years ago, *IN LIVING COLOR* kind of did the same thing. People said, 'Man, did you see what they did on *IN LIVING COLOR*?' People talked about it. I always wanted to have a show where people talked about it, like in school and that kind of thing. 'Did you see what *THE PJ'S* did? Did you see that show *THE PJ'S*?' So, we really want a show that people are really going to like to watch, that's memorable, that's different, that's not like every other show. If we accomplish that, then I think we've really accomplished our goal." **APQ**

Animated Equity

In addition to *THE PJ'S* being the first-ever stop motion series on prime-time, the show also struck a historic blow for animation writers everywhere. After weeks of negotiations and discussion, the Writers Guild of America signed an agreement with Imagine Television last May to cover the series under the union's Minimum Basic Agreement. This means that for the first time ever, writers on an animation series are being given the same salary, rights and benefits that live-action writers have enjoyed for over half a century.

Steve Tompkins was the main proponent for the change. He explained, "Originally, Disney, to keep their costs down, segregated their animation writers so that they could pay them non-union wages. And now, 60 years later, they're the company, ironically or fortuitously, who broke down those walls and said it is about time we had the same rights."

"I said to them, 'Your show won't get made, because I'm tired of slave labor. I'm tired of working twice as hard.' Because you *work!* You work 52 weeks a year in animation, unlike most shows which is like 39 to 40. Very long hours. Another thing is the [animation] scripts really take a lot more time and attention because, unlike a live-action show where we give four days of rewrites and then you shoot it, we keep rewriting it for seven

months! So I said it's just not right. And the other thing we said was, there's no way we're doing that to other people. We're not going to hire writers and force them to work under the conditions that I, myself, worked under. It's just not right. I couldn't believe somehow Imagine made it happen. Imagine said to Touchstone, 'This is the way it's gonna be.'

"We didn't know how big a victory this was until we showed up at the Critics' Association meeting in July and we were *besieged* by grateful writers! In fact, the secretary of the treasury of the Guild immediately descended upon us! We were like, What did I do?' But all the writers at *KING OF THE HILL* and all the other shows were incredibly grateful to us for setting this precedent." **APQ**

Laura Schiff

THE PJ'S INNOVATION WITH A WILL

A select filmography of the Will Vinton Studios

by ERIC
LURIO
and DAN
PERSONS

1974

CLOSED MONDAYS
Directed by Bob Gardiner
and Will Vinton.

This is Vinton's only actual Oscar win. A derelict wanders into a closed museum, and discovers that, when the humans aren't around, the works of art live

lives eerily all their own. Mixing equal parts abstract imagery and TWILIGHT ZONE spookiness, the film's a textual and technical standout. Ground-breaking animation here; watch in particular for the bust that mocks the derelict during his mumblings, and the way the guy puffs out his cheeks (a

gradual building up of clay layers) as he dismisses the weird goings on.

1975

MOUNTAIN MUSIC
An early music video, of sorts.

1976

MARTIN THE COBBLER
Won first prize at the Ottawa International Animated Film Festival, mostly because it didn't look a bit like Gumby. The discovery that stop motion clay animation could be just as expressive as cels was a major discovery.

1978

CLAYMATION
A self-produced documentary of the studio.

RIP VAN WINKLE
A straightforward retelling of the Washington Irving story, this got an Oscar nomination, only to lose to the National Film

Board of Canada's SPECIAL DELIVERY. And you thought William Shatner was offense enough.

1979

THE LITTLE PRINCE and THE LEGACY
Both copped a couple of fest awards. The former got some heavy rotation on HBO.

1980

A CHRISTMAS GIFT
Notable for its meticulous detail and simple storytelling style, this short film, set to a Peter, Paul, and Mary song about a poor boy's Christmas, still teeters dangerously close to mawkishness.

DINOSAUR
Seems every stop-motion animator has to do a dinosaur film (genetic memories of Willis O'Brien, perhaps?). This is Vinton's: a motormouthed little gradeschooler delivers a report on dinosaurs while braving the

CLEAN SWEEP: Deciding not to rest on their Claymation laurels, Vinton Studios have moved into the digital realm. Recent efforts include their lively, CG animation for Clorox's "Metal Test."



heckles of a smart-ass girl in the front row. Lapses into an atmospheric, *tour de force* depiction of a T-rex attack. One of the studio's more memorable efforts, and a TV favorite. Pretty funny.

1981

THE CREATION

Directed by Joan Gratz

This animated "painting" got an Oscar nomination. It's a worthy successor to Gratz's *MONA LISA DESCENDING A STAIRCASE*. Narrated by James Earl Jones.

1982

THE GREAT COGNITO

Directed by Barry Bruce and Will Vinton

A stand-up comic free-associates an account of WWII, morphing into everyone from Duke Wayne to the Andrew Sisters to the Japanese Army. A fast-paced non-sequitor, this was nominated for an Oscar, but lost out to John Minnis' *CHARADE*, which in fact was a bit better.

1984

THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN

Directed by Will Vinton

This is Vinton's only real animated feature. Loosely based on the sequel to *Huckleberry Finn*, this takes Tom Sawyer, Huck, and Becky Thatcher on a voyage in an ornate zepelin piloted by Mark Twain and a "Mysterious Stranger." While clearly targeted for children, this survey of the works of Mr. Clemens manages to sneak in some of his later, darker stuff. It was briefly on video and is almost impossible to find.

1985

RETURN TO OZ

Vinton Studios did the Gnome King sequences for this feature film, netting themselves a Special Effects Oscar nom.

VANZ KANT DANCE

John Fogerty wanted to get back at his ex-manager in song; his label hired Vinton to whip up a music video about a light-footed con-man and his pick-



STAR VEHICLE: Vinton's take on the courting rituals of dolls for Nissan's "Toys" ruffled the feathers of previous benefactor Mattel, but re-established the studio's cred as one of the edgiest, most innovative animation houses around.

pocket pig. Interesting mix of film and video allows Vinton to, at one point, conjure a Busby Berkely-like kaleidoscope of dancing swine. Kind of cute.

a helluva lot livelier than the stultifying "Starship Michael" sequence that is supposed to be the video feature's reason for being.

con-man pig and his snail sidekick breaking into a haunted mansion to retrieve Frankenstein's monster. Surprisingly wicked humor.

1987

WILL VINTON'S CLAYMATION CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Directed by Barry Bruce

The Vinton Studios at the height of their fame. A couple of Siskel-and-Ebert-like hosts join the California Raisins to sing carols and have a good time (and argue about what the hell "a-wasseling" actually means).

MOONLIGHTING: "Come Back Little Shiksa"

An obscure, yet Emmy-award-winning sequence from the ABC series has David turning Maddie into a witch and Maddie getting her own back with a suitable curse. Willis' priceless response: "She finally did it. She turned me into a horny toad."

1988

SPEED DEMON

This Road Runnerish chase sequence for the Michael Jackson vanity epic *MOONWALKER* is

RAISINS SOLD OUT! THE CALIFORNIA RAISIN SHOW, and MEET THE RAISINS

Directed by Barry Bruce
The California Raisins were originally a commercial for a trade association. The spot won a Clio, and that led to more commercials, and that led to something almost unprecedented: a Saturday morning TV series and a number of primetime specials. These won several Emmys and even first prize at Annecy. Vinton could get away with building a kids series around a product's spokesperson because parents groups are for raisins, and so didn't complain.

1991

WILL VINTON'S CLAYMATION COMEDY OF HORRORS

Directed by Barry Bruce
The studio, having gotten a bit sick of the Raisins, decided to do something new and original. They came up with a twisted, slightly more adult-oriented TV special that has a Vanz-like,

1993

MR. RESISTOR

Directed by Mark Gustafson
Fun with electrical junk. Inventive, but not particularly interesting. A major, stylistic departure for the studio.

1995

ZEROX AND MYLAR

Directed and animated by Joel Brinkerhoff
One of the studio's few forays into the realm of bad taste. Looks nothing like the "company style," which may not be a good thing.

1997

NISSAN: "Toys"

G.I. Joe and Barbie pop the clutch, and tell yuppie priss Ken to eat their dust. This gem of a commercial reawakened Nissan's faltering "Mr. K." campaign, re-established the studio's cutting-edge creds, and netted a lawsuit from Mattel, who wound up looking like a bunch of humorless schnooks for their troubles.

APQ

Whom Angels DESTROY



NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

Fighting the war for humankind's soul

by L. JAGI
LAMPLIGHTER

In the midst of a future Tokyo, two giant creatures square off for battle: a monstrosity comes to destroy humankind, known only as an Angel, and a bio-construct manned by an inexperienced boy on his maiden excursion. From deep below the ground, those who created the robot watch from their command center. The fight begins, the Angel trashing both boy and robot, smashing buildings in the process. Those below stand breathlessly, their hearts pounding — except for the commander, who sits motionlessly, fingers pressed together, watching intently.

The Angel pummels the robot and tosses it aside. Lying in pain, the boy slowly begins chanting: *I will not run away. I will not run away.* His determination strengthens. He pulls himself to his feet and, in a feat of hysterical strength, destroys the attacking monster, saving the city.

Below, those in the command center cheer his success — all except the commander, who merely offers a faint, half-smile. Hardly the response expected from a man who has just watched his only son take a

beating and return to save humankind.

Beyond Robot No. 28

It was the mid-1990's, and if anime fans could agree on one thing, it was that giant robots had been done to death. So, why was Gainax — the golden boys of the anime business — making another giant robot series? Director Hideaki Anno explained his reasoning to Japan's *Newtype* magazine soon after production of this new series began: "How could I think of doing another, old-fashioned robot anime? Our reason was that we thought it would be good to put on TV a robot anime that was not spon-

sored by a toy company. Robot anime has been stuck in a pattern, and we wanted to break out of it. For example, I wonder if a person over the age of 20 who likes robots is really happy."

Break out of it, he did. Enter NEON GENESIS EVANGELION, a series which combines the traditional giant robots and



SACRIFICES OF WAR: Commander Gendou Ikari has consigned three children — including his own son Shinji (left center, flanked by Sohryu Asuka Langley on left and Rei Ayanami on right) — to rapport with the giant, robotic Evangelions in the war against the Angels. But is victory the commander's only goal? **RIGHT:** Future Tokyo.

cute girls with probing angst-filled character development and layers of X-FILE-like intrigue, and then throws in a handful of TWIN PEAKS-style obscurity to boot.

Our Story Thus Far (-Out)

In the year 2000 the Earth was devastated by a cataclysm known as the Second Impact, causing the seasons to go awry and many cities to be lost as the sea level rose. Now, It is 2015, and Mankind is being threatened by terrible, destructive creatures called "Angels." Existing weapons do not work against them. Mankind's only chance lies with the Eva units — giant bio-robots that can wrestle with the Angels and break through the AT (Absolute Terror) fields which deflect all conventional weapons. But the Eva units require living pilots, and the only pilots who have been successful are children conceived at the time of the Second Impact.

Fourteen-year-old Shinji Ikari is summoned to a meeting with Commander Gendou Ikari, his father, who abandoned

to maintain their sanity under the terrible stress that their positions as saviors of mankind place upon them. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that SEELE, the organization funding the project, has a hidden agenda, and that Gendou Ikari of NERV has an agenda of his own. Viewers soon find themselves torn by curiosity. What are the Angels? What is the "Human Completion Project" SEELE speaks of? What really happened during the Second Impact? For whom is the suave and charming Kaji — an "old friend" (or is he?) of some of the major NERV staff — really working, and what will happen if it comes out that he is a double agent? And what is the secret of the first child to consign herself to an Eva, the quietly enigmatic Rei Ayanami?

When asked to point out some plot subtleties which viewers might otherwise miss, Matt Greenfield, producer of

you really want food for thought, however, check out our Eva site at www.advfilms.com."

Oedipus And Electra Have Nothing On These Guys

Giving EVANGELION an especially power are the engaging characters that populate the series. Favorites include the aforementioned Shinji; Asuka, the brash and en-



ergetic red-headed Second Child (pilot); Misato, the sexy raven-haired captain who takes the children under her wing; cool R&D director Ritsuko, who may know more than she is saying; Agent Kaji, who is Asuka's

adored trainer and Misato's old lover; and the blue-haired, red-eyed Rei Ayanami, whose silent loveliness has made her a recognized figure even

PENSIVE WARRIOR: Rei Ayanami was the first child to pilot an Evangelion, to disastrous result. Reserved and enigmatic, her value, both in the war against the Angels and to Commander Ikari, may be greater than anyone knows.

amongst non-anime fans in Japan. However, these characters have more than their share of faults, especially psychological ones. In fact, some of them could be said to be downright basket-cases.

Some fans empathize with the character's struggles. Others are exasperated by them. Spike Spencer, who provided the voice for Shinji for A. D. Vision's English-dubbed version, summed up many viewers reaction to Shinji: "Face it, Shinji's a wuss. He underwent the abandonment of his father and the death of his mother at a very young



Shinji at a very young age to head up NERV, the organization which houses and maintains the EVA units. Upon arriving, Shinji discovers that this is no warm-and-cozy reunion, the only reason for the summons is that Gendou expects the boy to pilot Eva 01.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION follows both the worldly battles of the Evas against the Angels and the psychological battles that Shinji and the other pilots fight

the American version of EVANGELION for A. D. Vision, explains, "One of the great beauties of EVANGELION is that it plays on so many levels, and a great part of the satisfaction that people derive from it is based on the self-discovery of those levels...Ritsuko [director of R&D at NERV], in particular, has a few lines that seem fairly innocuous on the first viewing and absolutely drip with double meaning after you've seen the last five episodes. One line I love is where she says of Rei, 'She has trouble living with other people.' Pretty intense, when you consider what happened between Rei and Ritsuko's mother.

"...What I would suggest is that, once you've finished viewing all 26 episodes in order, you go back and begin watching them again, this time looking for clues that lead up to the ending that you know is coming. If

age. He did not do a good job of coping. Many people who are abandoned get tough and hardened. Not Shinji. He became a cream puff. But he's a cream puff with a heroic cream filling."

Amanda Winn, who directed the English language version of episodes 1-7 for A.D. Vision, and who also provided the voice of Rei for the English dub, comes to Shinji's defense. "Everyone hates Shinji. They say, 'Why doesn't he stand up for himself?' But, they forget, he's just a 14-year-old boy. The worst thing *you* had happen when you were 14 was probably getting a pimple."

Another character who fans either love or hate is Asuka, the spunky and prideful pilot of EVA unit 02. Some viewers find her bossy attitude and competitiveness annoying, but others find her charming. Tiffany Grant, who provided the voice for Asuka for the dubbed version, grew to like the character she portrayed. In her article "In Defense of Asuka," (to be found at <http://toad.net/~geist/>) she writes, "Okay, I know — I hear it all the time — she's annoying." However, she goes on to say, "With the odds stacked insurmountably against her, she triumphed (for a time anyway) over her own fears and inadequacies and against humanity's worst enemies — the Angels....Let's face it — the gal's got balls."

Of the plethora of psychological problems experienced by the characters of EVANGELION, none is so rampant as troubles with parents. Shinji's father abandoned him when he was a child and now shows him no affection. Asuka's real mother went crazy, mistook a doll for her daughter, and tried to get Asuka to commit suicide with her. Asuka's stepmother did not care for her or want her. Misato hated her father — one of the scientists involved in the Second Impact. Ritsuko hated her mother — the genius who programmed the Magi, the three computers that advise NERV. Then, there is Rei. We'd explain her parent/child issues, but editor Dan says the next three issues are already booked up.

Amanda Winn believes that "troubled relationships with parents" is the theme of EVANGELION. "No one's mom survives. In Eva, all mothers end badly," she says. "Then, there is Shinji and his father. Gendou's a bastard. I have no compassion for him. You don't treat your kids that way. You could write volumes about his lack of emotional attachment and neurosis."

"An Individual Vision"

What makes EVANGELION stand apart? Carl Horn, the editor of the American release of the EVANGELION comic, believes EVANGELION commands the attention it does because it is "an individual vision."

"I'm always trying to remind people that it all comes down to the original cre-

ator," says Mr. Horn. "When you watch EVANGELION, you can feel that there is a real person behind it."

Director Anno, the genius behind EVANGELION, got his start in anime under Hayao Miyazaki, where, amongst other things, he animated the scene from NAUSICAÄ AND THE VALLEY OF THE WIND where the God-Soldier fires on the giant insects. He and a group of other fans founded the anime production company Gainax, which has produced such works as WINGS OF HONNEAMISE, NADIA OF THE MYSTERIOUS WATERS, and that other archetypal robot and cute girl show, GUNBUSTERS.

Then, in the early '90s, Anno fell into a deep depression. He spent the next four years, in his words, "simply not dying." Towards the end of this period, he came upon a book on Jungian psychology.

"Anno had never studied psychology before," Carl Horn explains, "but he recognized many things about himself in what he read. They inspired him to the ideas which eventually became EVA. Anno personally named all the sound track pieces in EVA — the instrumental pieces were named for Jungian imagery."

Inspired by these insights, Anno rose phoenix-like from the ashes of his personal hell to create NEON GENESIS EVANGELION, pouring into the series everything he had experienced during his last four years. To get himself through the project, he is said to have used the same mantra he gave to Shinji; "I mustn't run away. I mustn't run away."

Ms. Winn is a great fan of Anno's work; however, she is less charitable than Mr. Horn in her interpretation of the psychological aspects of EVANGELION. "EVA is a therapist's dream. Anno obviously didn't get along well with his mother, or with any female. My guess is that Anno hates women. He must have been one very lonely little boy. Rumor is that when he finally finished EVA, he shaved all the hair off his entire body... all of it. That's just weird."

EVANGELION ends with the dedication, "To my father, thank you. To my mother, goodbye." Perhaps, here we see a glimpse of the source both of Anno's mental struggle and of all the parent-child trauma in EVANGELION.

A Myriad Of References

A fan of science fiction and animation, director Anno delights in paying tribute to works which influenced him. "He throws in references or in-jokes whenever he can," explains Carl Horn.

The most obvious references are the Judeo-Christian allusions observable everywhere, from the cross-shaped explosions which result when certain Angels explode, to the Cabalistic names of the Angels, to the names of NERV's com-

Excerpts from ENCYCLOPEDIA EVANGELION

by L. Jagi Lamplighter

Introduction

From giant cross-shaped explosions to ceilings inscribed with the Cabalistic Sepheroth, NEON GENESIS EVANGELION offers a rich tapestry of Judeo-Christian symbolism. For viewers used to encountering Christian references in art, it is important to recall that the imagery in EVANGELION is not an attempt to push a religious doctrine on a reluctant audience, but a deliberate artistic choice; much as if a Western director were to include Greek mythology or references to Japanese Buddhism in his work. In an interview with Japan's *Tokion* Magazine, director Hideaki Anno explained, "I'm obviously not from a Christian upbringing, so they will have to excuse me for borrowing certain Christian words and images." He goes on to say, "I don't think that there is anything in the film that could be considered offensive. But it's hard to cross borders and cultures without changing context to some extent. The film was made for Japanese audiences."

Adam: The Father of Mankind, who was also responsible for our fall.

In EVANGELION, the giant of light Adam is visible in a brief shot of newspaper articles from the time of the Second Impact (below). In the movie which follows the series, Masato claims that the Second Impact happened when Gehirm scientists tried to shrink Adam into something the size of an embryo. It is supposedly hinted that the 15 angels that follow were released from Adam during the Impact. If so, that might explain why they wish to return to Adam, and why their doing so could cause a cataclysm.



puter (Magi, as in the Three Wise Men.) NEON GENESIS EVANGELION itself is a Greek phrase meaning "New Creation Gospel." This title, by the way, was specifically chosen by Anno to represent the series to English-speaking audiences. The Japanese title was *SHIN SEIKI EVANGELION*, or "New Century Evangelion." Anno also chose other terms particularly for the English audience. In the original, the beings who came to devastate Mankind were called "Shitou" — a word meaning "disciple" or "apostle." Anno insisted the word be translated as "Angel."

Perhaps less obvious, however, are the many references to Anno's favorite works of science fiction. EVANGELION contains allusions to, amongst many others, *THE PRISONER*, *THE THUNDERBIRDS*, *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*, and stories by Arthur C. Clark, Harlan Ellison, Philip K. Dick, and Cordwainer Smith. For instance, the title of the second half of episode 26, "The Beast That Shouted I At The Heart Of The World" was derived from Harlan Ellison's story, "The Beast That Shouted Love At The Heart Of The World." The English name chosen by Anno for the project that SEELE and NERV are trying to carry out is "The Instrumentality of Mankind," the name Cordwainer Smith uses for the background in which his fascinating short stories take place. In episode 4, Shinji resigns from NERV and has his identity card stamped

out in a scene reminiscent of the opening titles in the British TV series, *THE PRISONER*. Also, the ends of EVANGELION and *THE PRISONER* are frequently compared, as both shows conclude with controversial, surrealistic last episodes. In an odd touch derived neither from Biblical sources nor from science fiction, the last names of many of the main characters are taken from Japanese battleships from World War II: *Katsuragi*, *Soryu*, *Akagi*, *Ayanami*,

Fuyutsuki.

The Fans React

Whenever a director tries a new approach, there is a risk that the fans will not accept it. For Anno and Gainax, that risk paid off with EVANGELION. According to Matt Greenfield, "EVA has been extremely well received by anime fandom. However, what is far more gratifying is that many people who do not regularly

watch anime are beginning to get hooked on EVA. In both Japan and America, non-anime fans who have seen the show have said 'Wow.' It's because EVA has more depth to it, more hooks to grab you. It's not all guns and explosions. If anything, it's overdone in complexity. Here in America, it's doing quite well in the fan market. The mainstream push hasn't happened yet. But, then we didn't expect it to take off until Vol. 4. That's when you've seen enough to figure out that there is more to this than first meets the eye."

When asked if the odd, surrealistic final episodes produced outrage amongst fans in Japan, Matt responded. "Actually, I'd say that 'shock' would be a better word to describe the general reaction to the end of the series. In fact, by the time the last episodes were shown, EVANGELION was already sparking a great deal of contro-

versy over the extreme levels of violence and adult content in what many had assumed would be just another giant robot series. A good analogy would be to imagine what would have happened if *NYPD BLUE* had started airing episodes with nudity in them without any advance publicity or warning.

"The shape and form of the last two episodes came as a big sur-

prise to the Japanese audiences, and there were many fans who felt cheated by what they perceived as an unfinished series. Unlike American television, anime series usually have a definitive beginning, middle and end, and this lack of closure, with the fate of many characters left unresolved, was what the Japanese fans were reacting to. It's interesting to note that a similar situation followed the broadcast of the final episode of *THE PRISONER*, a series that closely resembles Eva in many ways."

The success of EVANGELION has helped other anime programs to succeed. Carl Horn explained, "Japan now has about 50 anime TV series running; before EVANGELION, there were only 30 or so."

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION's popularity won the movie, EVANGELION: DEATH AND REBIRTH, the Special Audience Choice Award from Animation Kobe, Japan's animation awards. This was quite an accomplishment, considering it was up against Hayao Miyazaki's widely-popular *MONONOKE HIME* (which won the Best Theatre Film Award). Gainax and EVANGELION also captured two other awards: the Evangelion video game *GIRLFRIEND OF STEEL* won Best Interactive Software, and Saquisu Shiro's music score for the series won Best Musical Score.

The End — The Series vs. The Movies

Fans of EVANGELION fall into two groups. Those who believe the series is about the characters, and those who believe it is about the mystery. When the first group meets, they discuss such subjects as whether Shinji should show more backbone, or whether Asuka's brashness crosses the line

IMPULSE DRIVE: The mercurial Sohryu Asuka Langley is the "second child" of the Eva corps. Her rapport with Eva 2 may provide hints to the dark secrets lurking behind the genesis of the giant robots.



ENCYCLOPEDIA EVANGELION

Angels: The Japanese word for the creatures of dread and violence which plague (or test?) Mankind in EVANGELION is "Shitou," which means "Apostle" or "Disciple." However, Director Anno requested that, when translated into English, the word "Angel" be used. This is appropriate as the names given to the creatures in the series are names of angels from the Cabalistic tradition. The names given to the individual angels somewhat reflect the nature of the menace they represent.

Some Jews and Christians have found the symbolism in EVANGELION troubling. Viewers used to *HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN* and *TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL* are shocked by the grim destructive portrayal of angels. They forget that in the Old Testament, angels were often greeted with terror. The famous Christian apologist C. S. Lewis remarked upon this, observing that modern angels were often portrayed as kindly and gentle, the sort who might pat one on the head and say "there, there," while in the Bible, angels are so terrifying and fearsome that they must begin their conversations with the phrase, "Fear Not!" The angels in EVANGELION are definitely of the non-empathetic, "Fear Not" variety.

between charming and obnoxious. The second group argues over who killed Kaji and whether Ritsuko's mother's death was actually suicide. (This writer personally believes she was murdered by Gendou.) When it comes to the ending, the first group prefers episodes 25 & 26, which deal with the resolution of the characters' emotional problems. They say that the movie is too violent and unemotional. (Actually there are three movies: EVANGELION: DEATH, EVANGELION: REBIRTH, and END OF EVANGELION.)

Matt Greenfield agrees with the first outlook. "The TV series end dealt with characters. It's an upbeat ending that focuses on people.

The movie covers the physical happening, but it strikes me as 'mean-spirited.' Yes, the questions raised by the multi-leveled mystery are answered in the movie. But, it strikes me as a *Deus ex Machina* solution. Sort of, 'Thank you very much. Now, give me your eight bucks.'

"BLUE SEED also has a semi-metaphysical ending. No knockdown battle to the death. This threw some fans. Western science fiction movies tend to end with lots of explosions. Ever since STAR WARS, we've had this idea that we have to end with the Death Star blowing up. This doesn't necessarily have to be the case."

Carl Horn also prefers the movie ending. "Certain events in the movie conflict with the last episodes. Because of this some fans believe that the TV ending takes place after the film. The TV ending is peaceful. The film ending is violent. It may be that the extreme brutality of the movie came from Anno's anger at fans who did not like or understand the end he intended."

The second group — those folk seeking to tie up all the loose threads in the raveled fabric of EVANGELION's plot-line — despise the plotless surrealism of episodes 25 and 26, which they believe exist in their current form only due to lack of funding. Fans who have been waiting for 24 episodes to discover "what's really going on" prefer the movie for the answers it provides to many of the questions raised during the series.

Bill Burns, an avid EVANGELION fan, agrees with this view. "It amazes me that anyone could like the TV ending. Nothing gets solved. After months of speculating about the various mysteries the series raised — as we waited for the later episodes to be released — I finally saw the end, and it answered...nothing! I felt betrayed. One reason I liked the show so much was that I enjoyed trying to figure out the secrets. If there weren't actually any answers, then I had wasted a lot of time."

"I haven't seen the movie, but I have read a synopsis. The movie ending is a little dark, but I liked it nonetheless. But, then, as I figure it, any ending is better than no ending."

Amanda Winn reports that as the cast of the English-dubbed version came to the end

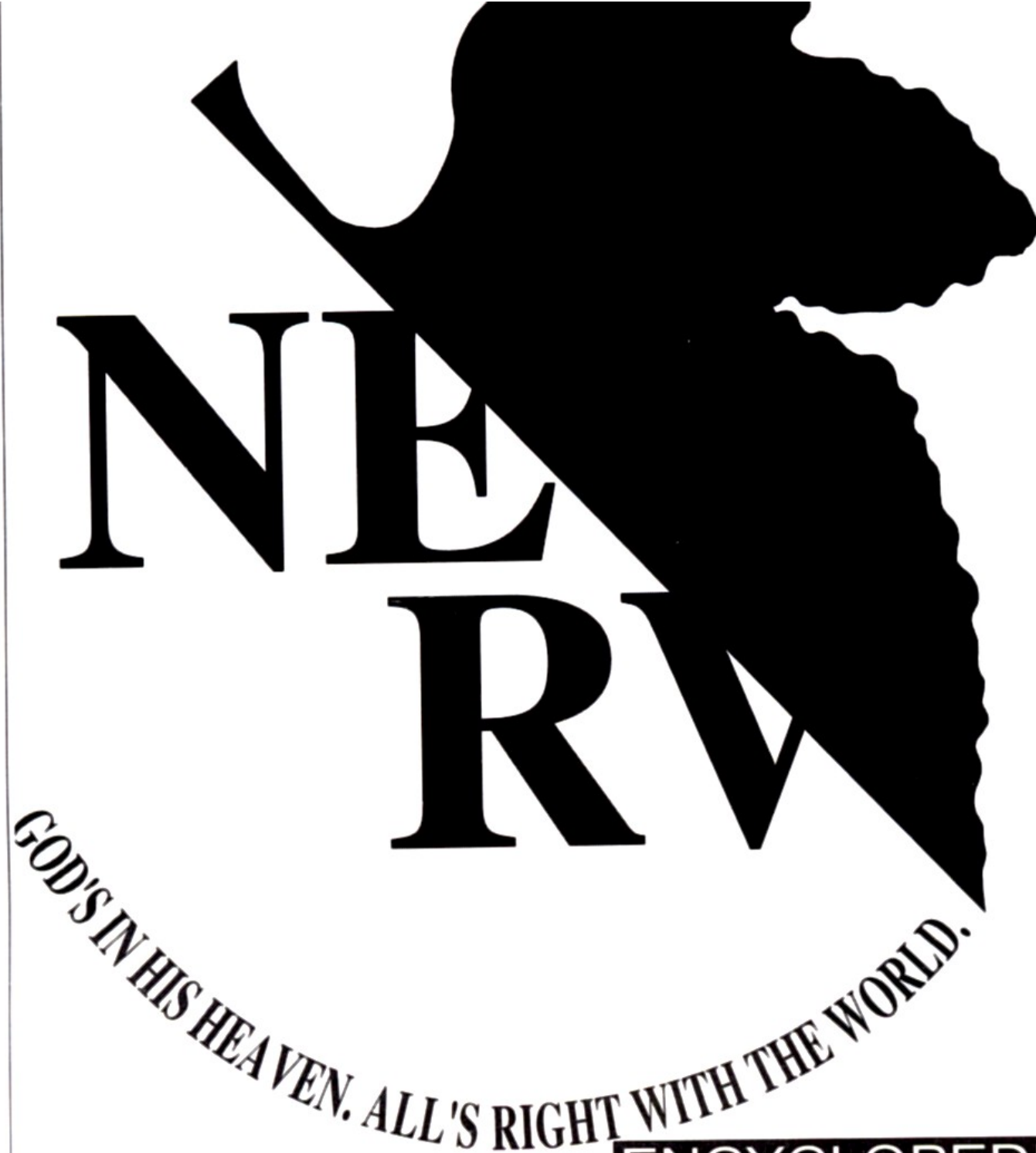
comes along every company places bids and of course the highest bid wins. This process

of episode 26, they kept the tape running a few minutes after the official dialog finished. While the tape ran, Spike Spencer continued to talk as Shinji. "It was hilarious," Amanda said, "Spike had Shinji saying, 'Is this really any way to end a series? Excuse me? How am I going to get out of here? Is there a bus that comes here? What happens to me now? The movie better damn well make up for this!'"

Spike Spencer himself reports that he found the ending of the series somewhat disappointing. "I'd done so much with Shinji, then the end was just a re-gurgitation of things I'd already done. It was easy for me. I just had to say, 'Okay, reuse that other section of tape,' but, it was odd."

"I know what they say, that the director wanted to play that whole stylized game. Minimalism, they call it. Minimalism, my ass! Somebody ran out of money is what it was. I'm telling you, if I had a couple of bucks, I would have given it to Gainax for some color!"

No date has yet been set for the release of the NEON GENESIS EVANGELION movies here in the States. Gainax has not yet settled upon an American distributor for the films. Rod Peters, president of A.D. Vision explains, "There is a lot of competition in bidding for the Japanese animated films. With anime being in such high demand, the prices of the anime films have quadrupled since we purchased our first title. We are talking about millions of dollars when it comes to a famous series or movies. When a hot title



ENCYCLOPEDIA EVANGELION

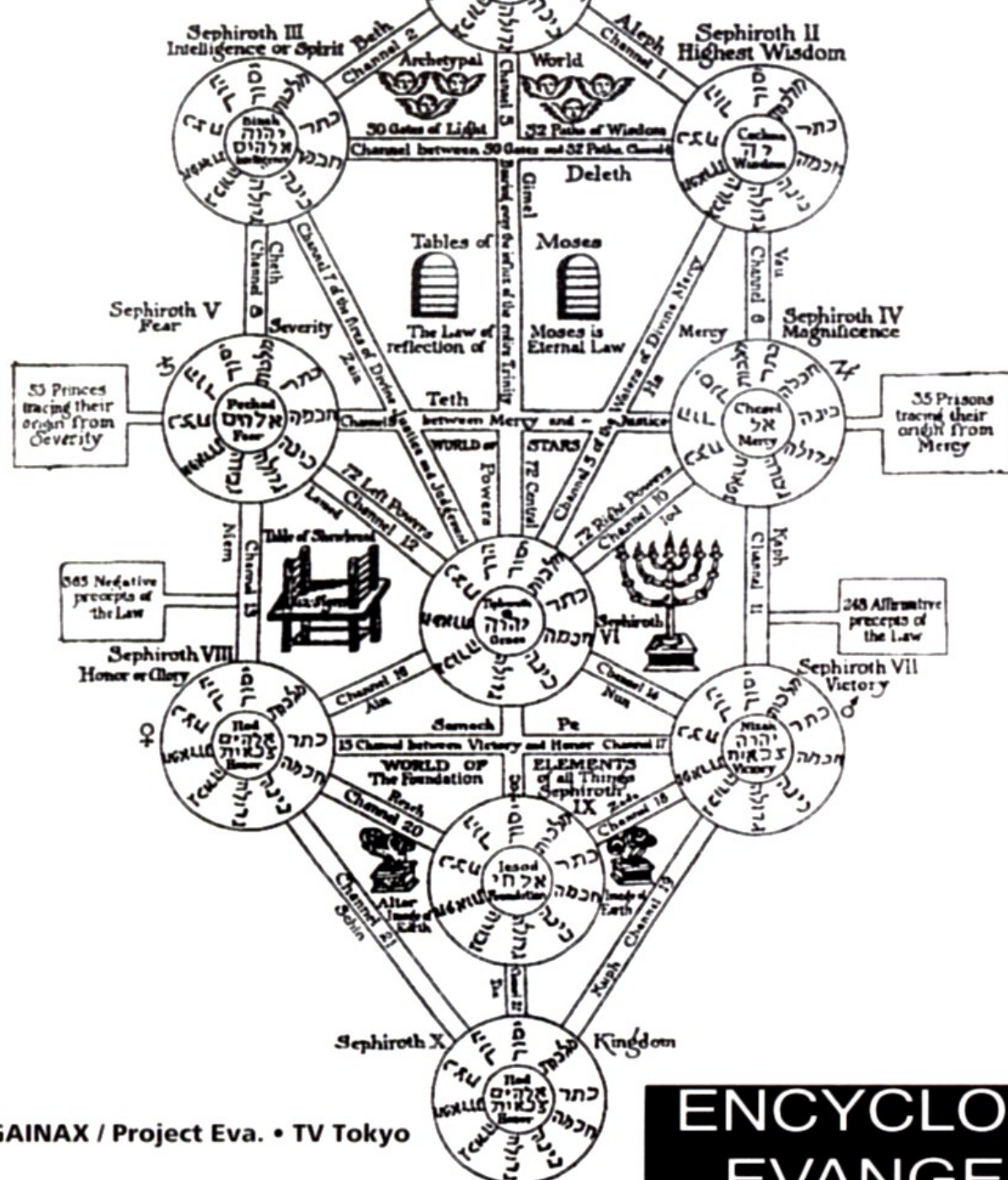
NERV: The organization (above) currently carrying out SEELE's plans...or is it carrying out Commander Gendou's plans?

SEELE: The organization that wishes to carry out the Human Completion Project predicted in the secret Dead Sea Scrolls.

Gehirm: A second organization formed by SEELE carry out the steps the Sepheroth-like steps required to complete the prophecy. After the "suicide" of Gehirm's chairman (Ritsuko's mother) the organization's name was changed to "NERV."

SEELE, Gehirm, and NERV: In the German language, "seele" means "soul," "gehirm" means "brain," and "nerv" means "nerve." Thus, the brain was responsible to carry out the plan of soul. But, when the brain failed, the nerves took over.

SEPHIROTHIC SYSTEM OF TEN DIVINE NAMES



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ENCYCLOPEDIA EVANGELION

Sepheroth: According to the Jewish Cabalistic tradition, the Sepheroth, or Tree of Life, is a chart representing the ten stages by which God the Creator can be discerned by Mankind.

A version of the Sepheroth drawn in 1653 by the German monk Athanasius Kircher appears in EVANGELION (above).

Dead Sea Scrolls: Found by shepherds in the caves overlooking the Dead Sea, these scrolls included early copies of Bible books and other esoteric writings thought to have been written between 350 B.C. and 68 A.D. Access to the delicate scrolls has been strictly controlled since their discovery. This has caused wide-spread speculation that some of the material is being kept from the public.

In EVANGELION, a prophecy found in the Scrolls regarding the evolution of Mankind has been kept secret by an Illuminati-like organization called SEELE.

of bidding can take months, even years."

Voices Of EVANGELION

Japanese voice actors, or *seiyuu*, are idolized much as Americans idolize movie stars and supermodels. They are favorite guests at conventions and lectures, and whole magazines exist just to cover their exploits. One such magazine, *Voice Animage*, recently published a list of the top ten most popular voice actors and actresses. Three of the actresses in EVANGELION ranked among the top ten: Yuko Miyamura (Asuka), Megumi Ogata (Shinji, also Julian in ARMITAGE III; MEGAMI PARADISE's Juliana; and numerous parts in SAILOR MOON), and Megumi Hayashibara (Rei, plus Girl-Type Ranma in RANMA 1/2).

Amanda Winn described her experience with EVANGELION. "When we first cast EVA, we were very excited, because with the exception of Jason [Jason Lee, voice of Shigeru Aoba], Spike, and myself, we had all new actors. It was fun starting with a group of newbies, especially since everyone did a great job.

"Originally, I wanted to play Misato. Then

Allison Keith came and read for it. She's a friend of mine, and she did such a great job. I was not going to pretend I could do better. Matt Greenfield, who was directing, said that he had actually thought of me for Rei. I thought this was strange at first because I usually play hyper girls like [Devil Hunter] Yoko, or hard core action characters like Rally Vincent

"I loved playing Rei," Amanda said, "Turned out to be one of my favorite roles. It was a real challenge. Rei is very detached in the beginning. As the series goes on, she starts to warm to Shinji. I had to find ways to show that warmth, to be a little more human, and yet keep the distance. Then, she gets killed and comes back a clean slate. When we got to that point and I had to go back to being totally detached, I was like, 'Oh, man!' The new Rei has no idea who Shinji is, except maybe she's been briefed that he's one of her fellow pilots. But, the emotional bond is gone."

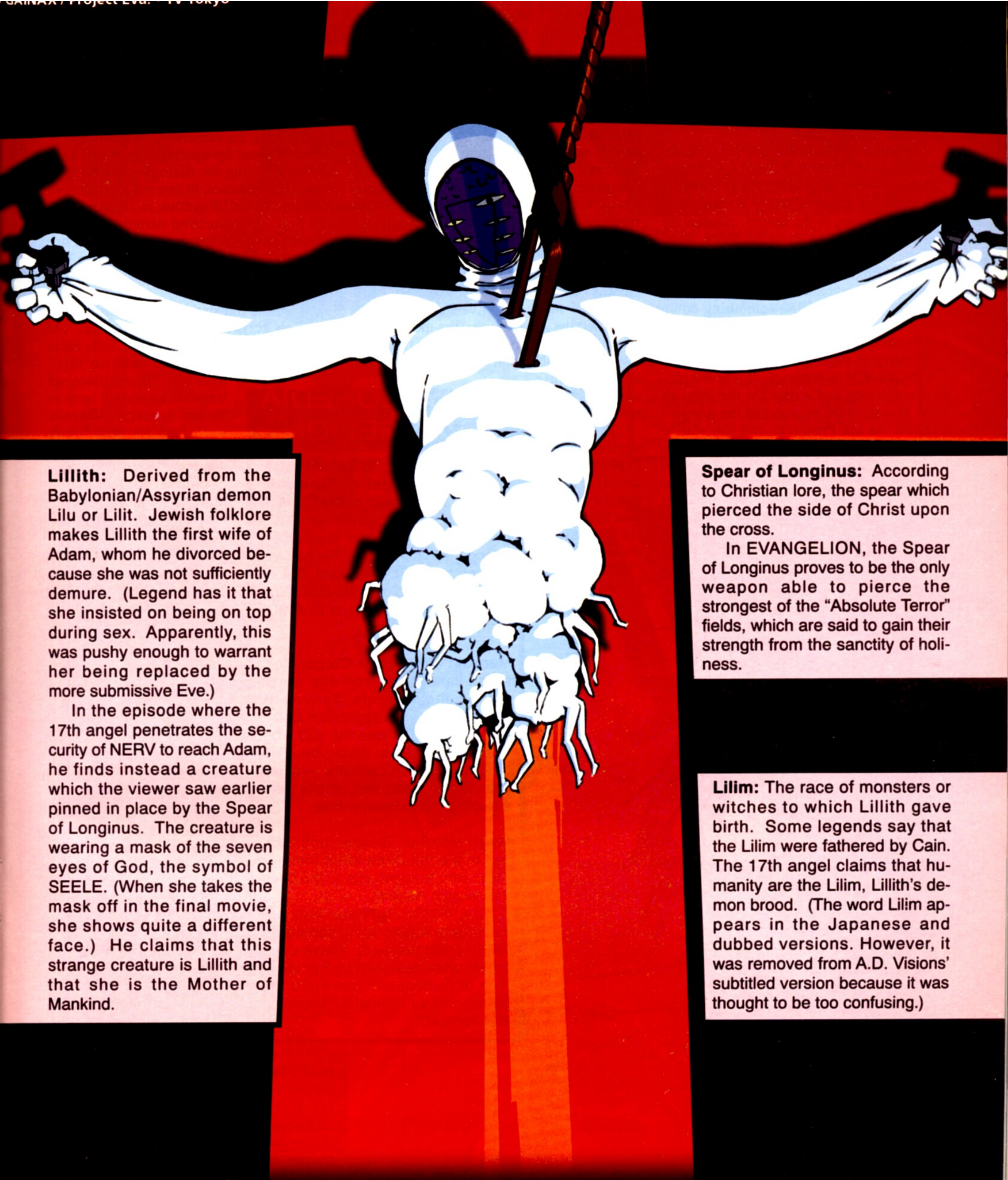
Amanda has previously appeared in such rolls as BATTLE ANGEL's Gally, cool cop Rally in GUNSMITH CATS, as well as principle rolls in BLUE SEED, DEVIL HUNTER YOKO, and PLASTIC LITTLE. She has written and directed over a dozen English releases for A.D. Vision. Amanda is also working on a film career and can be seen in the upcoming film CIVIL ACTION, with John Travolta and Robert Duvall, where she plays a jury member.

Tiffany Grant, the voice of Asuka, summed up her experience with EVANGELION as, "I found [Asuka] a lot of fun to portray, and sometimes challenging. I think all my reactions and characterizations were prompted by the script and story lines, along with the reactions as they were animated. I felt like I always stayed true to the concept.

"The two most humorous moments I recall (pretty vividly!) were the scene from 'Magma Diver' when Asuka is super inflated and I said, 'Ich sehe wie eine Oompa Loompa! (I look like an Oompa Loompa!).' The other is the famous kissing scene from episode 15. 'Hey Shinji! Do you wanna kiss me?' I just about choked myself doing the gargling afterwards because I was laughing at the same time."

Tiffany, who has also voiced characters in such anime as GOLDEN BOY, BLUE SEED, and GUY, reports that she actually has a real plug suit, a gift from some fans.

Spike Spencer, the voice of Shinji, also enjoyed his experience working on EVANGELION a great deal, and hopes that he will be called upon to reprise the roll, should A. D. Vision acquire the movie. He has enjoyed being invited to anime conventions where he has been able to speak with fans of the series. In addition to his work as Shinji, he has appeared as Takateru in SUIKODEN, Prince Mars in FIRE EMBLEM, Funk in ELLCIA, and Yugo in BATTLE ANGEL, among others. He also has appeared in radio spots, commercials, and some independent films. He and Amanda Winn appeared together in



Lillith: Derived from the Babylonian/Assyrian demon Lilu or Lilit. Jewish folklore makes Lillith the first wife of Adam, whom he divorced because she was not sufficiently demure. (Legend has it that she insisted on being on top during sex. Apparently, this was pushy enough to warrant her being replaced by the more submissive Eve.)

In the episode where the 17th angel penetrates the security of NERV to reach Adam, he finds instead a creature which the viewer saw earlier pinned in place by the Spear of Longinus. The creature is wearing a mask of the seven eyes of God, the symbol of SEELE. (When she takes the mask off in the final movie, she shows quite a different face.) He claims that this strange creature is Lillith and that she is the Mother of Mankind.

Spear of Longinus: According to Christian lore, the spear which pierced the side of Christ upon the cross.

In EVANGELION, the Spear of Longinus proves to be the only weapon able to pierce the strongest of the "Absolute Terror" fields, which are said to gain their strength from the sanctity of holiness.

Lilim: The race of monsters or witches to which Lillith gave birth. Some legends say that the Lilim were fathered by Cain. The 17th angel claims that humanity are the Lilim, Lillith's demon brood. (The word Lilim appears in the Japanese and dubbed versions. However, it was removed from A.D. Visions' subtitled version because it was thought to be too confusing.)

an independent film called *IMPOSTURES*, which they both hope will eventually see general distribution.

Coming To America

"Translating Eva was a task of nightmarish proportions," explains Matt Greenfield, "There are lots of lines where things are merely understood. Japanese allows for sentences without a subject, so the listener assumes the characters are talking about one thing, when they are actually talking about something very different. English needs a subject. The language is not as ambiguous. We had to be very careful about not nailing something down which wasn't nailed down to begin with. We couldn't help giving a little away."

Greenfield explained his roll in bringing *EVANGELION* to America. "I was the producer, director and writer for the English dubs, as well as the producer of the subtitled version. As the Producer, my job was to make sure that the show was properly translated, packaged and advertised for the U.S. market. As the Writer, I was responsible for making sure that none of the original subtext and meaning of the original was lost in the translation, while at the same time breaking it all down into a form that was both easily comprehensible and suitable for lip-sync recording. As the Director, I oversaw all of the casting and recording of the

English dialogue, coached the actors in their character interpretations and supervised the final audio mix. In essence, my job was to get into the heads of the original production team and try to recreate what they did, as closely as possible, in English. Japanese acting can throw you. The harsh language sounds more urgent than English. Lines which should be calm, sometimes sound frantic. So, we had to understand the meaning of each line, so that it could be properly rendered for the English audience.

"Sometimes we taped voice actors months before or after each other. So, I had to provide feedback, give the actor some idea what the subtext was. Was the line supposed to be hostile or nice? Often, in *EVANGELION*, what someone says is not as important as how they say it."

The dubbed version, Matt explained, allowed for additional explanation the subtitled version could not offer. "Dubbed does some nice things. We can

add additional explanation because we don't need to keep to the strict limit of one English sentence per sentence heard. We have more freedom; especially when the speaker is not facing the camera, and we don't need to worry about lip-syncing. Since we're entirely replacing the dialogue, we can add more. For instance, in one scene, there is a reference to the 09 system. In Japanese, this is a pun. In the dubbed version, we were able to get this across by adding a sentence which let the audience know that an *Oni* [Oni — oh-nine, get it?] is a Japanese demon."

After the translations were finished, the English script was sent to Gainax for cleanup. "They would send back little notes saying, 'Say this,' or 'You can't say this.'"

Matt said. "In one place, we translated a certain term as 'brain damage.' Gainax wrote back and said, 'Don't say brain damage, use the word 'contamination.' And, of course, contamination makes a lot more sense, in view of where it's all going."

"Another thing they wanted was the term 'Instrumentality Project,' even though that's not what it was called in Japan. We decided to use the term 'Human Completion Project' for SEELE's project and 'Instrumentality Project' when referring to Gendou's project. This stressed the fact that they were not quite the same program."

Farewell, My Gunbuster

NEON GENESIS *EVANGELION* is the forerunner of a new breed of anime, setting new standards for other series to live up to. Recently, Yoshiyuki Tomino, the creator of *MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM* and the other *GUNDAM* works, attempted to communicate the scope of what he wished to accomplish in his up-and-coming new series by announcing that this new work would "outdo

EVANGELION." This will be a hard boast for him to live up to. *EVANGELION* delivers all the explosive battles and bouncing cleavages a fan could desire, yet follows up with a sophisticated, intricate story that plumbs the depths of the human psyche. As Carl Horn points out, "The initial 'robot and cute girl' look is just to get their foot in the door. Once you start watching, it's like accepting the Trojan Horse. It's too late to withdraw...you're hooked."

AFQ

ENCYCLOPEDIA EVANGELION

Tabris: According to Cabalistic tradition, "the Angel of Freewill." Tabris is the angelic name given to Kaoru Nagisa, the Seventeenth angel, who comes in the shape of a young man (below, left). He has the chance to destroy Mankind, but instead places the ultimate fate of humankind into the hands of Shinji Ikari.

Marduk: The Marduk Corporation, which locates children who would make suitable pilots, derives its name from the Babylonian deity, Marduk. Marduk was the god worshipped in Babylon during the period of the Jewish captivity — when many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were thought to have been written.

Magi: Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar are the three Wise Men, or Magi, who brought gifts to the baby Jesus upon his birth.

In *EVANGELION*, the Magi are the three computers that coordinate NERV headquarters. These computers were designed by the chairman of Gehirm and represent her personality as "scientist," "woman," and "mother."





ENCYCLOPEDIA EVANGELION

Eva: Or Eve, our Universal mother, created from Adam's rib.

The Eva, the giant artificial humans used to fight the angels, were created from Adam's substance (below, center). The Eva unit 01 apparently had absorbed Shinji's mother, whose mind somehow still existed within it. It is suggested that the mind of Asuka's mother was trapped in unit 02, and that this is what drove the woman crazy.

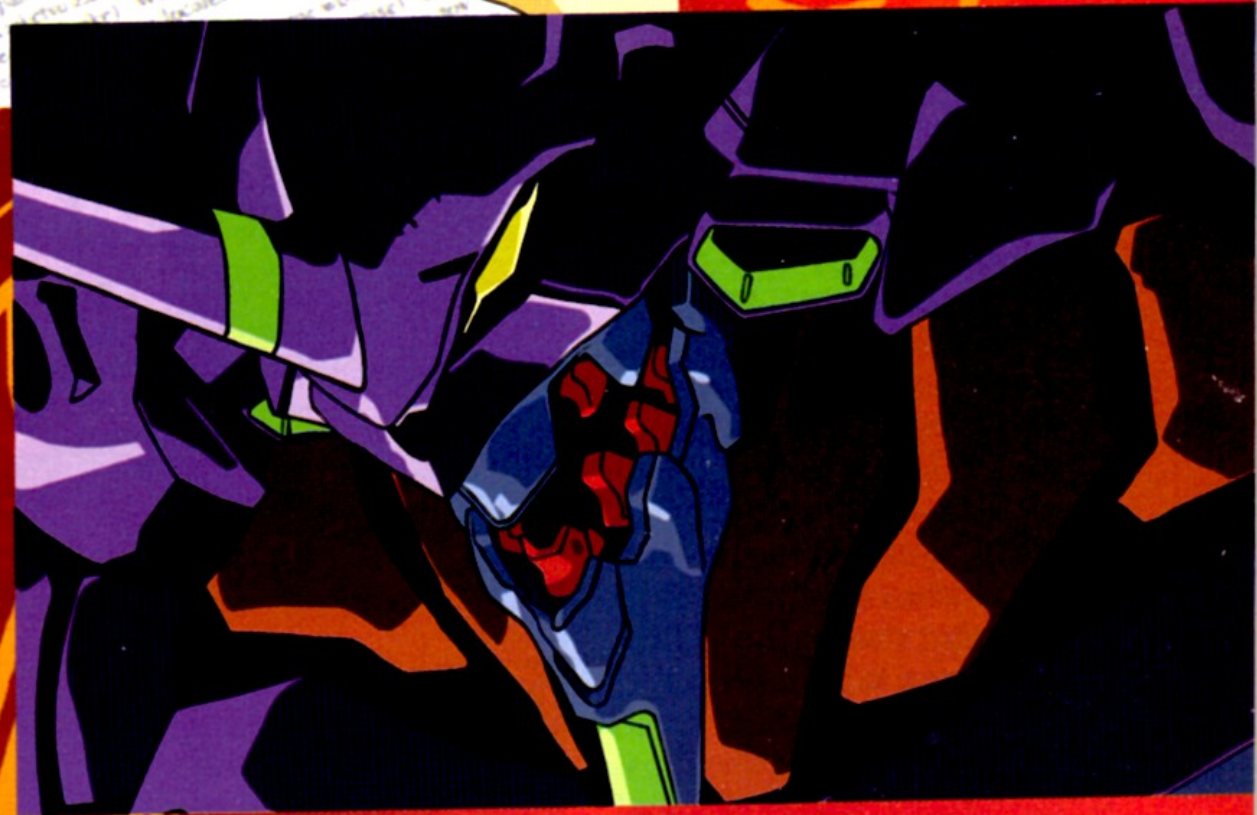
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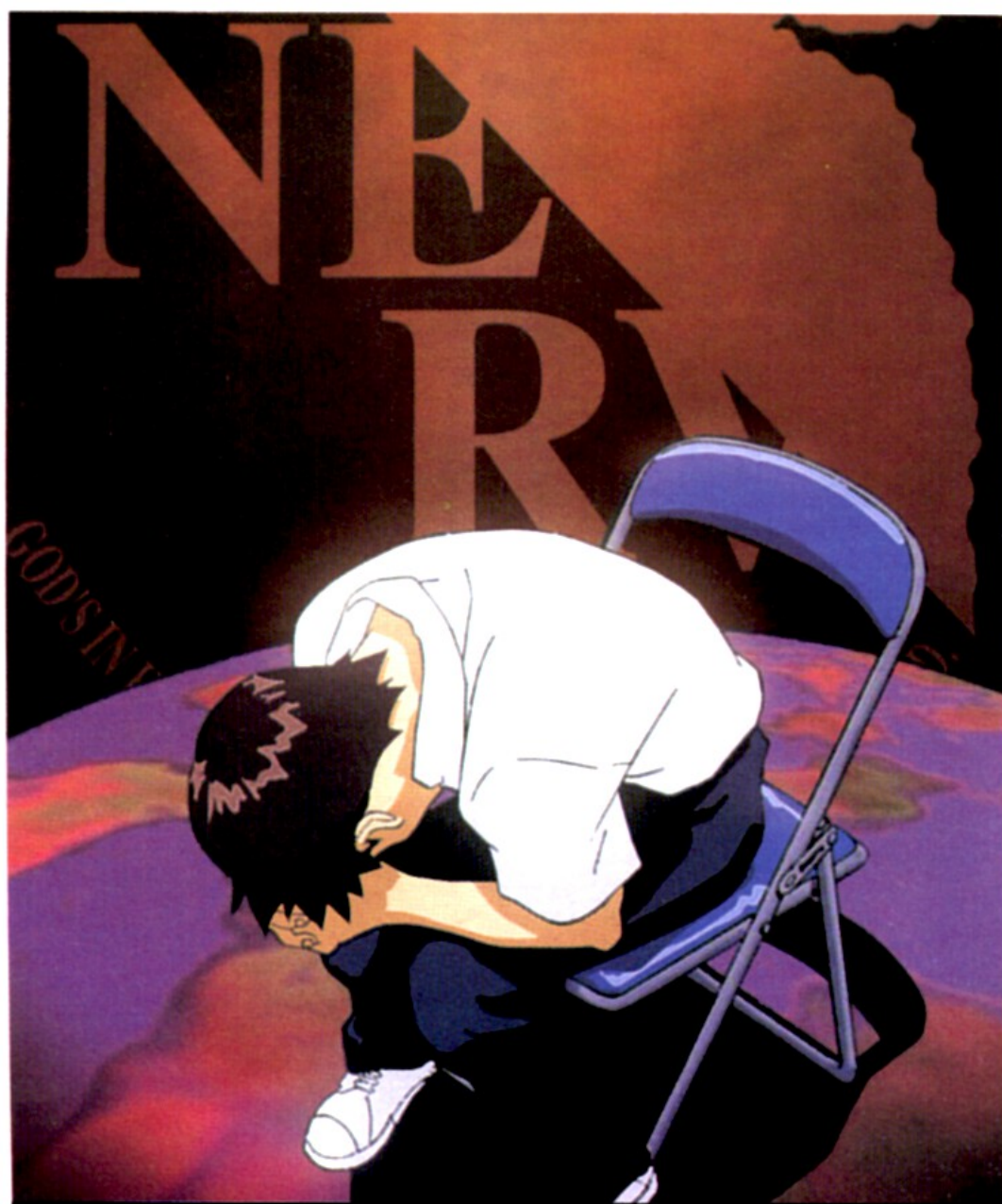
END of EVANGELION

The story ain't over when
the 17th Angel dies.

WARNING! Plot spoilers ahead!

Whether an avid fan or a casual viewer, there is one question those watching NEON GENESIS EVANGELION constantly ask: "What the @\$% is actually going on?" Believe it or not, this question is answered, to some degree, in the EVANGELION movies, much to the delight of those who feared that, like TWIN PEAKS, EVANGELION would turn out to be merely a web of clues with no conclusion.

There are actually three EVANGELION movies. EVANGELION: DEATH, EVANGELION: REBIRTH (also called AIR), and END OF EVANGELION (also called MY PUREST HEART FOR YOU). Originally, there was to be a single film. However, as the release date of March 1997 approached, director Hideaki Anno realized that he would be unable to complete what he wished to accomplish in time. Rather than rush the project, as some felt he had done with episodes 25 and 26, Anno broke the movie into sections. EVANGELION: DEATH and REBIRTH were released as scheduled in March. However, the conclusion, END OF EVAN-



LOSS OF NERV: The devastating events of the EVANGELION TV series are only the tip of the iceberg. What follows in three movies created in part to remedy viewer dissatisfaction with the show's finale may tie up many loose ends, but will no doubt keep fans puzzling for years to come.

GELION, did not appear until later that year.

EVANGELION: DEATH is a recap of the more important events from the first 24 episodes, with a few new scenes added. (New scenes include footage from the Second Impact with a voice-over of Commander Gendou Ikari and Kier, the head of SEELE, talking; and Asuka's attempt to seduce Kaji on the aircraft carrier.) REBIRTH takes place after episode 24, beginning with Shinji grieving the death of Angel 17 and ending with a cliffhanger — which is then resolved in END OF EVANGELION.

By the end of the third movie, most of the questions raised by the series have been answered. A few questions, such as who killed agent Kaji, are not touched upon. (Popular opinion points to Misato. Personally, this writer suspects Ritsuko. Director Anno is not saying, but he has stated that the handsome scoundrel was killed by someone from NERV.)

So, what was going on? Here are a few of the questions, and some of the answers:

What was SEELE and

NERV up to? What is the Human Completion Project anyway?

Inspired by Kaji's last message, Misato hacks into the Magi computer system and discovers the truth about the Human Completion Project SEELE has been working towards. Apparently, as Misato explains to Shinji, SEELE believes, "Man has already reached a dead end on its present state of evolution. The next step is to artificially initiate the evolution of man into a perfect single being.... We are like Adam, born of the source of life — Lillith. We are the 18th Angel."

In order to finish the Human Completion Project, (or the Instrumentality Project, as it is also called) SEELE needs the Eva, especially Eva-01, which has consumed part of an angel. Realizing that they can no longer trust Commander Gendou Ikari, they send the Japanese army to retrieve the Eva units. Armed soldiers break into NERV and begin slaughtering everyone they come across. SEELE also sends out their secret weapon — Eva units 05 through 13.

What happened to Asuka's mother?

Apparently, both Shinji and Asuka's childhoods were scarred by having their mothers absorbed into Eva. Viewers of the TV series may have picked up on the hints that Shinji's mother died when she was absorbed into Eva-01. In REBIRTH, we learn that Asuka's mother's mind was absorbed into Eva-02. This is apparently what caused her to go crazy and eventually commit suicide. When Misato hides the unconscious Asuka inside her Eva and launches Eva-02 into the bottom of the lake for safekeeping during the attack on NERV, Asuka's mother reaches through to her, urging her not to give up. "So, that's where you went, Mother," says Asuka. Then, she wakes up and takes on SEELE's flying Evas.

What of Gendou Ikari, and the mysterious Rei?

It seems that, in addition to being a clone of Gendou Ikari's beloved dead wife (Shinji's mother), Rei is also part Angel.

Gendou Ikari comes to get Rei in order to carry out his plan to alter SEELE's Human Completion Project to his own specifications. He believes that SEELE's plan will result in humankind's death. He has prepared for this day by merging with Adam, the giant of light whose condensation into an embryo caused the Second Impact. All he needs is for Rei to join with Lillith, the creature kept below NERV who is the source of humankind, and draw him into Lillith with her.

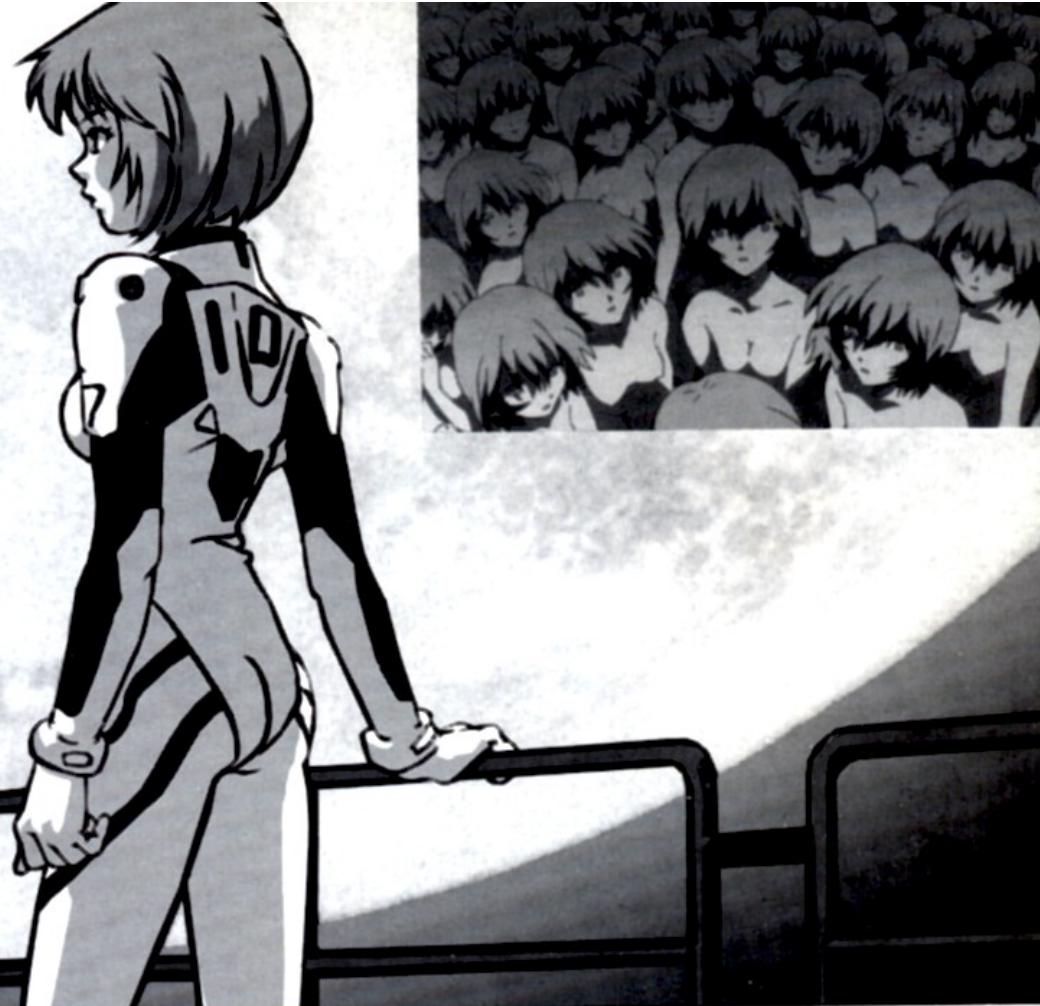
Only this is not the meek sweet Rei who loves the Gendou who saved her life. The first significant event of this Rei's life was being told by the 17th Angel that she was like him. Instead of drawing Gendou in with her, Rei announces, "I am not your doll." She steps into Lillith and says, "I'm back." Lillith replies "Welcome back." Lillith/Rei then swells to giant size and removes her seven-eyed mask to reveal Rei's face. This giant then strides across the landscape sucking up the souls of dying men. As Gendou is absorbed, his parting words are, "I'm sorry, my son."

How does it end?

Eventually, it all comes down to Shinji. He and his Eva are the last to be absorbed. Once inside the mass mind, Shinji suffers a psychological drama similar to episode 25 and 26, only with a much more graphic sexual content. Some fans feel that this is when the events of the last two episodes take place.

Only the conclusion differs. In the television ending, Shinji decides to take down the barriers separating himself from others and enter into a joyful union with the other characters. This could be interpreted as him accepting the mental union offered by the Instrumentality Project. The TV ending suggests that Director Anno wished for the Human Completion Project to succeed — suggesting that he

DIVINE RETRIBUTION: Rei Ayanami begins EVANGELION with a mysterious rapport with Commander Ikari. That relationship will change across the series and the movies, as the truth behind Rei's existence, and her place in Ikari's plans, is revealed.



feared loneliness and preferred the idea of a single consciousness where he need never be alone.

For whatever reason, Anno offers the opposite outcome in the film. In the movie, Shinji rejects the dreamy bliss of the shared mind and reasserts his individuality. He is ejected from the giant body of Lillith, along with other souls that trail behind him. He wakes on the beach next to a wounded Asuka, a sort of Adam and Eve for the rebirth of Mankind.

The last line in film is Asuka's comment upon waking, "This feeling sucks."

There is a great deal of violence and brutality in the films. Many fans were taken aback by the way some of their favorite characters behaved. The staff of NERV are brutally murdered by the invading soldiers. Shinji masturbates before the unconscious body of the comatose Asuka. Later, he receives a kiss from the dying Misato, only to discover that his mouth is now filled with her blood. Gendou Ikari shoots Ritsuko. Asuka destroys SEELE's nine Eva, only to have her Eva bloodily torn limb from limb when the nine reveal that they can regenerate.

The television ending, in contrast, is gentle. The characters whine a good deal during their long, repetitive, psychological debate, but when the end comes, it is cheerful, with much smiling and repeating of "Congratulations." On first and second viewing, the TV end seems

to be a jumble of psychological images with no plot resolution. By the third viewing, however, this writer realized that events in the movie are indicated in the TV ending.

Among the babble of the final two episodes is a written caption announcing that the Instrumentality Project has begun, but there is no explanation of what this means. Gendou is seen summoning Rei to do, "what she was created to do." There is even a brief glimpse of the dying Misato. The presence of these scenes demonstrate that Director Anno did have the events of the movie ending in mind when he wrote episode 25 and 26. However, the TV ending does not portray these events clearly enough to make them understandable to the viewer. Whether these two episodes are so confusing by design or because their production was rushed due to lack of money and time, only Anno knows for sure.

The controversy of how the movie and television series fit together may ultimately be answered. As the series is released to laserdisk in Japan (a process still going on at time of writing), Gainax is adding scenes to the later episodes to better support the events of the movies. While we cannot know until the laserdisks of episode 25 and 26 are finally released, it is possible that the new material will make it clearer when the events of the movie take place in relationship to the events of the last two episodes. Only time will tell.

AFQ

L. Jagi Lamplighter

by L. JAGI
LAMPLIGHTER

Gainax...the golden boys of anime. Merely the mention of their name is enough to excite the hearts of fans worldwide. Yet the very men who now stir such admiration both inside and outside the industry were once humble fans themselves. The story of their rise to fame is an inspiration to anyone who dreams of making it big in anime.

Back in the early 1980's, a group of college students got together to produce a five-minute animated short for Daicon III, the twentieth Japanese Science Fiction convention. The effort was considered nearly impossible: a five-minute short requires a great deal of work, and the group — little more than fans themselves — were committing their time and money to the arduous process of drawing, painting, and filming the staggering number of cels required, with nothing going for them except their sheer love of anime. Yet, when the dust cleared, they had managed to produce a work which wowed convention-goers and earned them a modest bit of fame.

Unwilling to go their separate ways, upon graduation the students formed a company called General Productions. General Productions opened the first science fiction specialty shop in Japan and did well enough that the group was able to stay together. Working in their spare time, they created a second five-minute short, which premiered at Daicon IV in 1984. This second short was as great a hit as the first.

The success of their shorts won them the interest of toy company giant, Bandai. With Bandai's backing, General Productions began work on their first animated feature. They founded a second company called Gainax (pronounced *Guy-nax*) to produce the film, and picked one of

GALLIC LAUNCH POINT: Taking pages from Jules Verne, Hayao Miyazaki, and a generation of anime titles, *NADIA: SECRET OF THE BLUE WATER* became an epic adventure with a loyal, fan following.



their number, 24-year-old Hiroyuki Yamaga, to direct it. Yamaga planned to call his work, *THE ROYAL SPACE FORCE*. However, according to Carl Horn, the editor of the American version of Gainax's *NEON GENESIS EVANGELION* comic (available from Viz Communications), "Due to the recent success of other anime, Bandai insisted the name must be 'something OF something,' like *NAUSICCA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND*. That's why the title Gainax finally went with, *WINGS OF HONNEAMISE*, has no meaning in the film."

WINGS OF HONNEAMISE was critically acclaimed, but did not get as much exposure as the young Gainax would have liked (though it did well enough to play in specialty theaters in America). The situation, sadly, still holds to today: some insist on calling *WINGS OF HONNEAMISE* the best animated film no one has seen.

Yamashina Maketo, head of Bandai, was quoted as saying, "I don't understand [Gainax's] *HONNEAMISE* in the least. Therefore, it has to be terrific." His sentiments were echoed by many, who found the animation beautifully done, but the plot slow and complicated. Still, it was generally agreed that for a work put together by a group not far beyond amateur status, the film was splendid.

The next year, 1988, Gainax produced the archetypal "robots and cute girls" work, *AIM FOR THE TOP*. (The title was a parody of *AIM FOR THE ACE*, a girls' tennis story.) It was directed by Gainax's other wonder-boy director, Hideaki Anno. The series was a great success and Gainax's reputation was secure. (*AIM FOR THE TOP* is known in America by its other title: *GUNBUSTER*.)

In 1990, they produced the series *NADIA OF THE MYSTERIOUS SEAS/ SPIRIT OF WONDER*, which has since

good GAINAX!

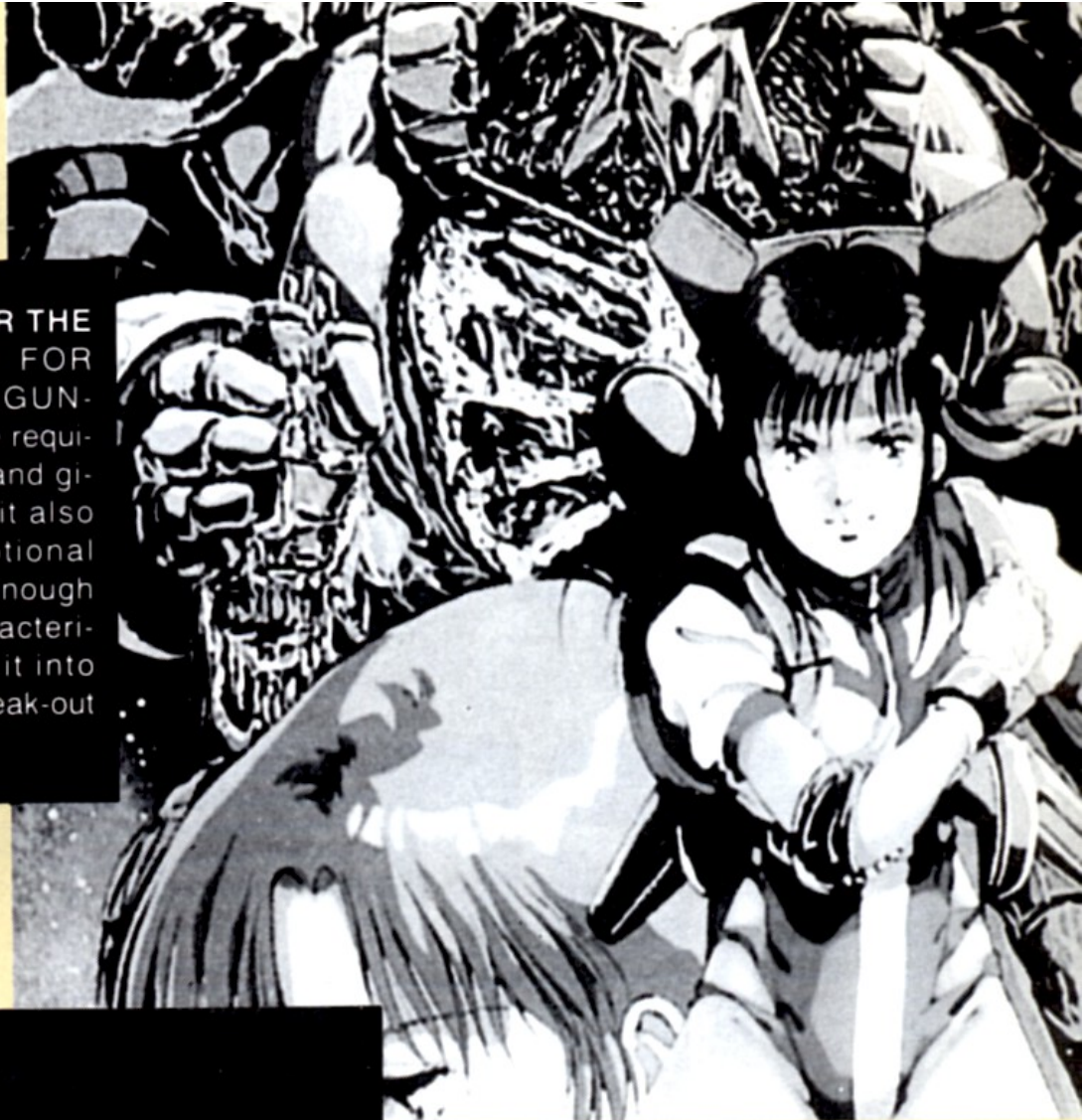
*The little studio that's
Everyfan's dream come true.*

become a cult favorite. In 1991, they produced a parody of Japanese anime fans in general, and of themselves in particular called OTAKU NO VIDEO. (*Otaku* is the Japanese word for an avid anime fan — although the term carries with it no little amount of controversy, the members of Gainax consider themselves *otaku*.) OTAKU NO VIDEO is said to have been directed by Hiroyuki Yamaga, the director of WINGS OF HONNEAMISE, working under a pseudonym.

It was not until 1996 that Gainax would produce another anime, the much acclaimed series NEON GENESIS EVAN-

“Gainax has put great effort into CD ROM’s and games,” Carl Horn explained, “because they can own the games, but they must go into partnerships for anime. EVA is the first anime they’ve actually owned part of. The others were basically works for hire. The president of Gainax has been quoted as saying that they did not profit from NADIA at all...did not make one cent. The game ideas are completely their own. They can keep the profits.”

DUTY NOW FOR THE FUTURE: AIM FOR THE TOP: GUN-BUSTER had the requisite pretty girls and giant robots, but it also had an emotional grounding and enough convincing characterizations to turn it into Gainax’s first, break-out hit.



GELION, directed by GUN-BUSTER’s director, Hideaki Anno. Twenty-six episodes in length, and fortified by two movies, the series has gone on to become one of the most acclaimed programs in anime history. In the meantime, however, the Gainax team had discovered another avenue for their incredible talents — video games.

Their first game *Dennoo Gakuen (Cyber School)* was released in 1989. Two years later, they released the game which was to make Gainax’s work in that field famous — *Princess Maker*.

Princess Maker and *Princess Maker Two*, in Gainax’s own words, “stood the industry on its ear.” With each new re-

lease, Gainax labored to push the edge of what had been accomplished in digital entertainment previously, both in the ideas behind the games and the look. Currently, one of Gainax’s best selling games is *Girlfriend of Steel*, a game based on the EVANGELION series. The game concerns the piloting of a giant EVA and includes an addi-

tional child pilot character not seen on the series.

About the time of the release of *Princess Maker Two*, Gainax and General Productions merged into a single company, still called Gainax. They discontinued the “General Production Wonder Festivals,” which they had run during the ’80s — at which they sold garage kits (models) and other goods from their store to ever larger gatherings of fans. However, in 1994, they sponsored another such event: *Gainamatsuri* (Gainax Festival). Gainax Festival offered such an array of Internet attractions that the festival seemed half-real, and half virtual.

During this period, Gainax also branched out into computer network-related work, both through the Internet and through bulletin boards. As with the video games, any profit they made over the Internet was all theirs. Gainax continues to branch out in this direction today.

Who are the people who make Gainax a success? Some have come and gone over the years, but the best known are the two directors, Hideaki Anno and Hiroyuki Yamaga, plus character designer extraordinaire, Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, Gainax’s general manager, Yasuhiro Takeda, and President Toshio Okada — who has since parted ways with Gainax.

Currently, Anno and Yamaga

Continued on page 47

EVANGELION

Manga

Carl Horn, the editor of the American version of the EVANGELION manga, faces many challenges while editing the Viz Communications release of the show. Making sure everything is coordinated is one of the foremost: "A raw translation from Japanese is done by a native Japanese speaker. Then the translation is rewritten to make the English sound good. We do two versions: one where the photos are reversed, so that the book can be read from left to right, and one collector's edition in the original format.

"The flipped version must be retouched by hand. The Japanese sound effects are whited out, and English sound effects added in. This requires that some of the art be retouched, where the sound effects cover the art. We send these pages to Arizona, where Wayne Truman retouches the art for us. However, some of the Japanese artists don't like the way their work looks reversed, so we also offer the collector's version. In the collector's version, the dialogue gets translated, but we don't change anything else. The sound effects remain part of the art style. We do provide a glossary of what the sound effects stand for.

"The comic book is not merely a paper rendition of the series. The *Evangelion* comic is

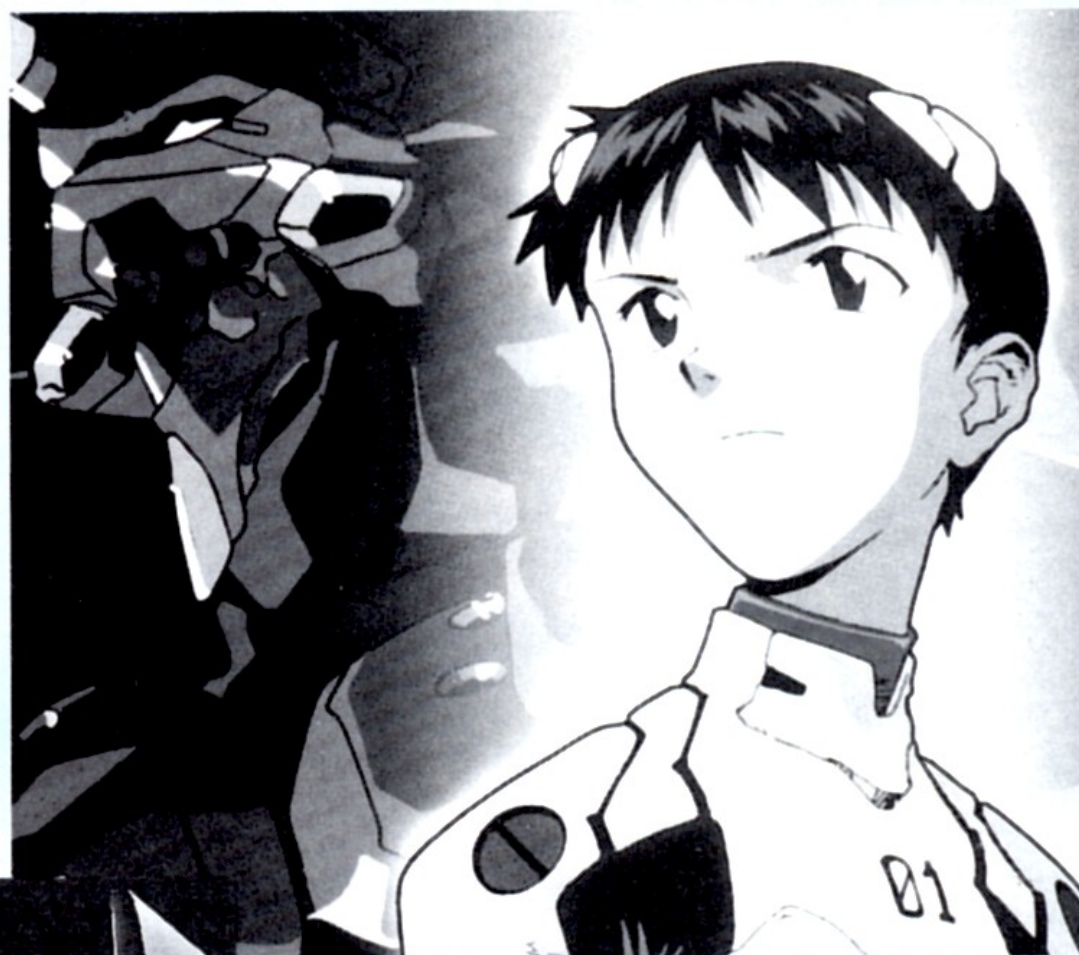
written and drawn by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, who did the character design for the anime. He and Anno worked out the story between them, but developed their works separately. The comic is similar, but has a different inter-



pretation."

Mr. Horn pointed out some of the differences: "Clues are unveiled in a different order, for one thing. Also, the characters' emotions are more personal and direct. Not happier, but more up-front. Shinji is not quite so wretched in the comic. He's more up front about his nihilism. He is more likely to make a dry comment rather than be totally uncommunicative."

Other differences? "Sadamoto threw out episode seven, where NERV rigs the government robot to go haywire. However, he really likes Asuka, so he



stretched out episodes in which she appears. Shinji and Asuka get along better in the comic.

"Currently, in Japan, the comic has only

fore [the manga is] finished. It actually is coming out faster here, because in Japan, it does not appear every month."

In an interview with Japan's *Newtype* Magazine, Yoshiyuki Sadamoto himself said, "I think that the manga will begin to differ from the anime. I really like clear, straightforward stories, so even if it seems a little immature, that's the direction I'd like to work towards...I don't know how I'm going to end it yet. I want to give it a happy ending...but what's happy?"

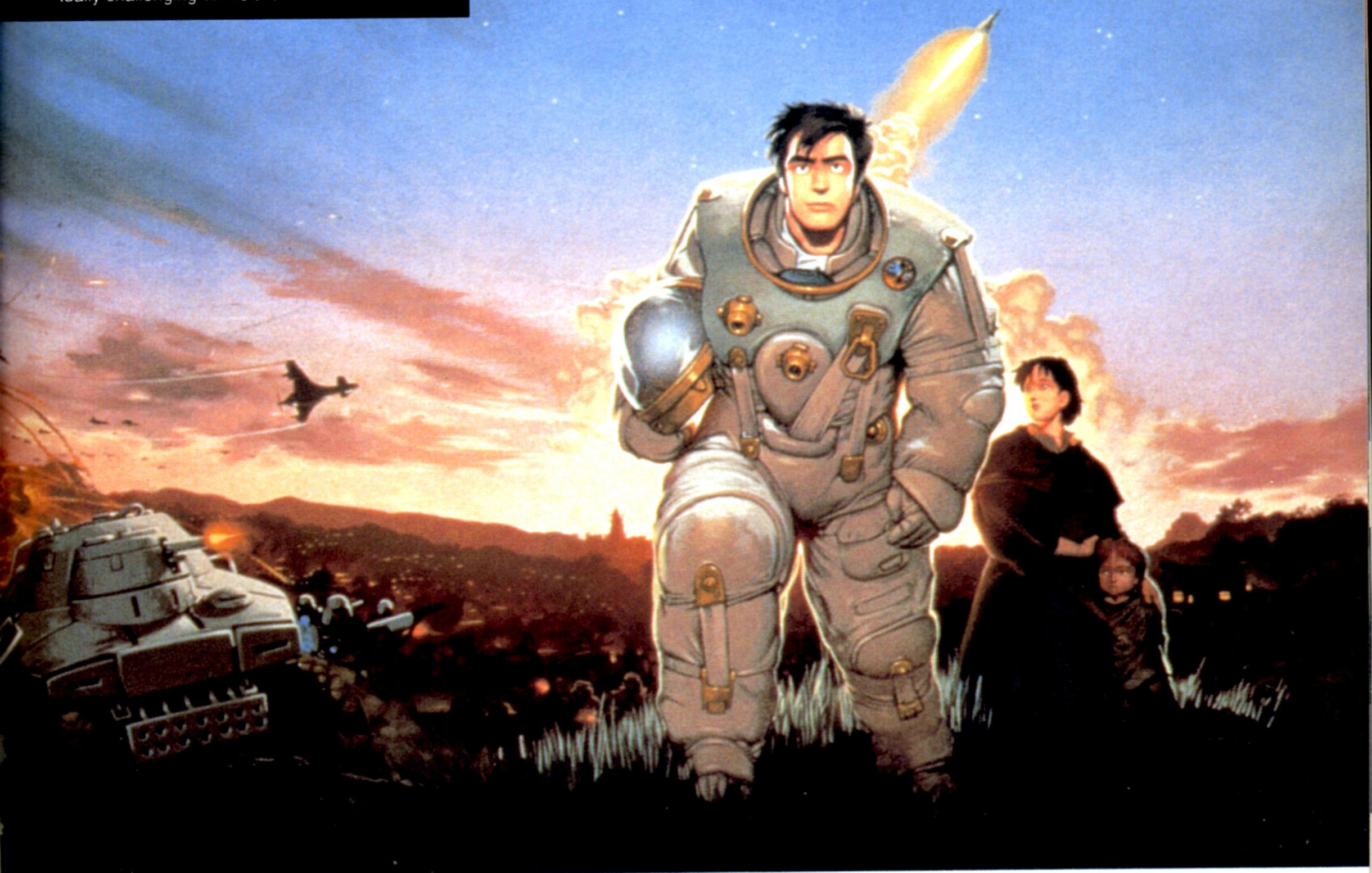
Mr. Horn enjoys his work on the EVANGELION comic partially because he believes his empathy with the show helps bring the originator's vision to the American audience. "I'm always aware that I'm shepherding someone else's creation. I take that very seriously. I'm in a good situation here because I'm such an EVANGELION fan. I seriously doubt I could do this for another title."

APQ

PRINT PRIORITY: The war with the Angels may be done on film, but Shinji & Co. battle on in the EVANGELION manga series, now in release in the U.S.

been written about as far as episode nine or ten. Viz's American release is about a year behind what's going on in Japan. Since the anime is entirely over, the manga is the only new official EVANGELION being created, though there are a tremendous number of fan stories. However, another director at Gainax wants Yoshiyuki Sadamoto to [work on] another project [BLUE URU]. At this pace, it may be years be-

AMBITIOUS AMATEURS: Fresh from their triumph at Japan's Daicon conventions, the newly formed Gainax studio got a commission from toy manufacturer Bandai to create their first feature film. The result: the visually stunning and intellectually challenging *WINGS OF HONNEAMISE*.



have both undertaken new works. Anno is working on a shojo (girls) anime about high school love, tentatively called *HIS AND HER SITUATION*. Yamaga, in his first real directing job since *WINGS OF HONNEAMISE*, is immersed in a project called *BLUE URU*, about which very little has been released. Sadamoto, who has designed characters for the majority of Gainax's works, is currently writing and drawing the *NEON GENESIS EVANGELION* manga. He plans to begin work soon on the *BLUE URU* video game.

Yasuhiro Takeda, Gainax's general manager, travels around Tokyo visiting various sites and comments upon his adventures in regular diary entries which appear on Gainax's extensive web site, (some of which is ex-

pertly translated into English by Gainax's interpreter, Michael House). Takada's web entries give the reader an impression of the personality of this man who heads one of the most creative production companies in Japan, as does his response to early inquiries about the production of *EVANGELION*, which is often quoted and compared to Bandai's comment about *WINGS OF HONNEAMISE*: "Even though [EVANGELION] is being made on the second floor, I know absolutely nothing about the plot. Maybe that's just as well. But having seen the already finished episodes, all I can say to those who haven't seen any of it is, I don't understand it. Having said that, it does seem that Anno is unusually relaxed about the series." Toshio Okada, president

for Gainax's first four productions, had a falling out with the others at Gainax and is now a professor at Tokyo University, where he is known as an expert on anime and the culture of fans.

What has made Gainax such a hit? Part of Gainax's success is talent and hard work. Another part is due to their philosophy. Many anime creators believe that they must either put forward a serious, well-executed project, or cater to the crowd with Fan Service — the industry's term for what would here be called "T & A shots." Recalling their origin as fans, those at Gainax feel otherwise.

"Gainax wants to have it both ways," Carl Horn explained. "They want to offer both fan service and deeper ideas. Their philosophy is: 'Why not both?'"

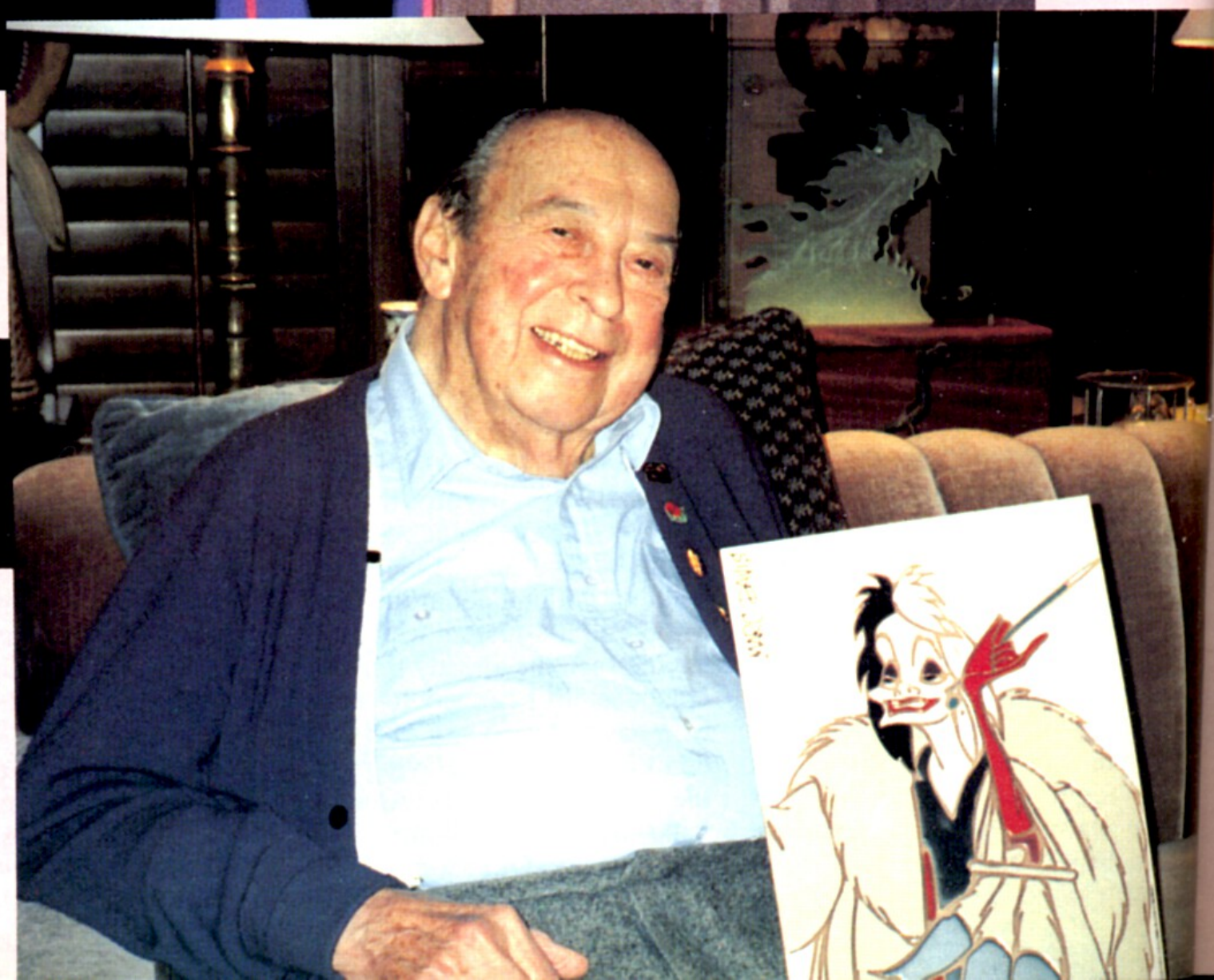
In an interview with *Tokion Magazine*, Director Anno discussed this issue. "You've got to realize the animation industry is mostly a boys' club, so of course they're going to create something pleasing to their own eyes. It's much more entertaining for us to draw large breasts than some grandpa's wrinkled old face."

Recent reports of a major reorganization at Gainax have worried some fans. Gainax has refused to comment upon the matter; at last word, they still plan to go ahead with all current projects. It may be some time before the long term results of this reorganization become known. Meanwhile, anime fans everywhere will be waiting with bated breath for the next creation from this Cinderella success-story company — an industry giant borne from Everyfan's dream come true.

APF



A WAY WITH WICKEDNESS: Above: SLEEPING BEAUTY's Maleficent radiates an elegant evil from every inch of her being: a bracing demonstration of Marc Davis' ability to express personality through design. Right: Davis, with 101 DALMATIAN's Cruella DeVil, a villainess Absolutely Fabulous before her time.



by MIKE
LYONS

Last year at Disney, "the company" celebrated 75 years, "the Mouse" blew out 70 candles and "the Marc" turned 85.

The last of these milestones is for Marc Davis. One of Disney's most eclectically talented artists, Davis worked for over four decades at the studio, breathing spark and personality into a variety of classic films and unforgettable characters. The timid Bambi, the spirited Tinker Bell and the deliciously malicious Cruella DeVil are just some of the characters who found their birthplace at the point of his pencil.

About the craft of animation, Davis said, "You have to create characters as an artist, but you also have to be able to bring them to life. That's what Walt Disney wanted and if you pleased Walt Disney, you were bringing things to life."

Davis' innate artistic ability has allowed him to create works that transcended the medium. "I think Marc Davis is one of the great draftsmen of our time," said noted animation scholar, John Canemaker, adding, "He has the ability to draw anything, human or animal."

As animation historian and critic Charles Solomon noted, Davis has taken this talent and married it with the skills of an animator. "He has the ability to infuse his drawings with life. If you look at his work, his characters always seem very much alive, in a way that you immediately grasp at the first glance."

With a twinkle in his eye and a jovial personality, Marc Davis enjoys retelling stories and events from his career at the Disney studio, which began on December 5, 1935. "During the early days of Disney, the women were all in Ink and Paint. The men were either in some part of Story or Animation. It was kind of like a nunnery and a monastery."

Before coming to Disney, the young artist found himself moving extensively, as his father worked in the oil business. This allowed Davis an eclectic education, including attendance to both San Francisco's Otis Art Institute and the California

Of precocious deer and sexpot fairies

The amazing career of animation master...

MARC DAVIS



LADIES' MAN: Legendary animator Marc Davis (above) sits with a replica of one of his most famous creations: Tinkerbell, from *PETER PAN*. Davis' lithesome sprite would go on to become a universally recognized symbol of Disney, second only to the mighty Mickey Mouse himself. Despite long-standing legend, though, the character was *not* based on cinematic contemporary Marilyn Monroe.

School of Fine Arts.

Then, a friend who owned a nearby movie theater contacted Davis. "He called me up one day and said, 'There's this film here that I want you to see. I think you should be working for Walt Disney.' The film was [the short subject,] *WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?* I went over to see it and I thought it was damn good. So, I decided to give it a try. My father had died and I was taking care of my mother, so we decided to drive down to Los Angeles and that's how I got this job."

Davis' tutelage at the Disney Studio began under Grim Natwick, another master of the medium. With Natwick's guidance, Davis and a team of artists helped fashion Snow White (or as Marc affectionately calls her, "The Girl") in Disney's landmark first animated feature in 1937.

Many of the artists working at the Disney Studio at this time came from newspaper cartooning and lacked any true artistic schooling. Not only did Davis have this schooling, but the artist was skilled in crafting realistic animal anatomy, thanks to his off-hours sketching trips to the zoo. This skill would allow Davis' talents to bubble to the surface when production began on one of the Disney's follow-ups to *SNOW WHITE*.

Shortly after the studio bought the rights to Felix Salten's book, *Bambi*, Walt Disney became fascinated by Davis' sketches of innocent, anthropomorphic young deer, rabbits, and skunks. "This was the first time Walt saw what I could do as an artist," said Davis. "I did the young animals in the story and apparently, he [Walt] was delighted with my work and said, 'I want to see this guy's drawings on the screen. Make an animator out of him.' So, I was trained by a few of the other animators — Milt Kahl, Frank Thomas — and I stayed on *BAMBI* for six years."

The end result, 1942's *BAMBI*, is one of film's enduring masterpieces and the beginning of one of animation's greatest careers. In order to help assuage some of the many responsibilities of running the studio, Disney eventually gave much of the animation responsi-

bilities over to a key group of artists, whom he called his "Nine Old Men" (taken from Franklin D. Roosevelt's nickname for members of the Supreme Court — Davis was of course a proud member of this very exclusive club). After working on numerous films during the war years, Davis was assigned the leading lady in what many would consider the studio's "comeback film," 1950's *CINDERELLA*. "Cinderella, I think, is the apotheosis of the Disney heroine that was introduced with *Snow White*," said Solomon. "Snow White is very much the little princess. She's both childish and child-like. Cinderella is much more of a young woman. She's a little more mature and more adult."

Davis' work on *CINDERELLA* would go on to strike a personal chord with Walt Disney himself, as Davis remembered, "One day, Walt was having lunch at the commissary with some people and someone asked him, 'Mr. Disney, of all the animation that you've done at the studio what is your most favorite?' And he said, 'I guess it would have to be when Cinderella gets her ballroom gown.' Which I did and always thought that was a wonderful compliment."

With *CINDERELLA*, Davis also proved adept at fashioning female characters, which became his forte for the next decade. The lead player in 1951's *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* was followed by *PETER PAN*'s Tinker Bell (1953 — based on actress Margaret Kerry, not Marilyn Monroe, as Hollywood legend would have you believe). He also animated both Princess Aurora and the brittle, calculating Maleficent in *SLEEPING BEAUTY* (1959). His last, and arguably most amazing animated creation was the grand dame Cruella DeVil in *101 DALMATIANS*. "She's fascinating to watch," said Canemaker of the *DALMATIANS*' villain. "She moved in this angular, aggressive way. She's all over the place, almost like a force

of nature. You don't like her as a person, although you love her as a character."

101 DALMATIANS would signal Davis' swan song at Disney animation, as he took his talents over to another section of the company, WED Enterprises (today Imagineering) where he brought his skills for characterization and personality to such popular Disney theme park attractions as The Country Bear Jamboree and The Haunted Mansion, just to name a few.

Today, Marc Davis stands as a Hollywood legend. With the industry in the midst of a prolific animation resurgence, a new generation of artists have been drawing inspiration from Davis' work each time they sit down at the drawing table.

One such artist is Bob Kurtz, who was a student of Davis, when the elder artist taught at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. "One of the things he did in class was that he would make us draw the models in 30-second or one-minute poses," remembered Kurtz, adding, "You would do some sketches, Marc would say, 'Time,' the model would change pose and all the other students would moan. But I loved it! He was showing us that you have to be focused and use your intuition."

Kurtz is now an award-winning animator and founder of the Burbank studio, Kurtz and Friends (his work includes the animated opening titles for *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE* and the *CITY SLICKERS* films). He calls Davis his hero and said of

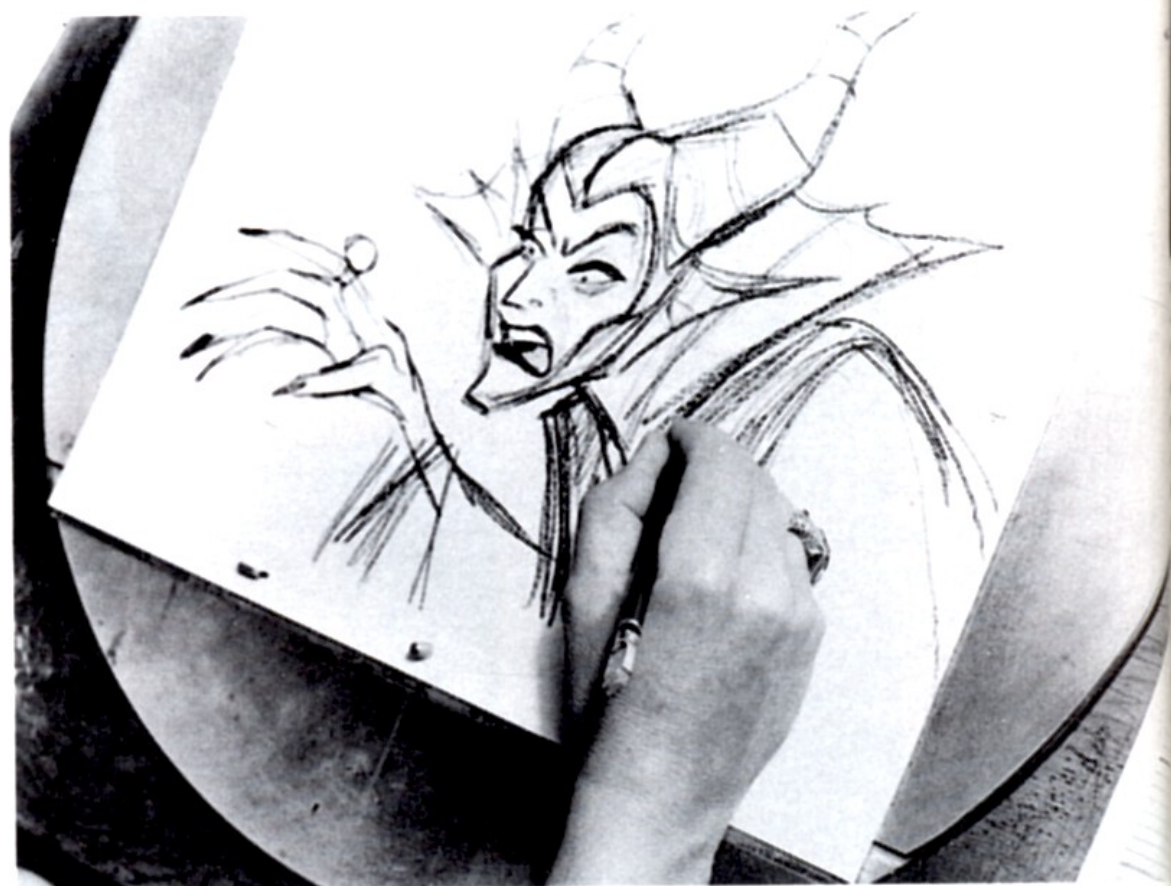
the man's diverse talents, "Animators get cast like actors — there are certain roles you wouldn't put them in. But, it's difficult to think of a role Marc couldn't handle. To use a baseball analogy, he's not just the team's utility player, he's the pitcher, the batter and the fielder all in one."

Davis currently resides in Los Angeles, California, with his wife, Alice, a former Disney costume designer and company legend in her own right (the clothes worn by the animatronic cast of *Pirates of the Caribbean* are her designs). The two met in one of Davis' art classes and continue to make joint appearances at animation art galleries and Disneyana Conventions.

It's at such appearances that Davis is amazed to see his former boss has now been lifted to the level of a mythic figure. Davis, who worked closely with the man reflects, "He was a very special man. A guy like Walt only comes along every hundred years."

The same can also be said of Marc Davis.

AFQ



DRAWING UPON THE FORCES OF GOOD AND EVIL:

Legendary animator Marc Davis poses with voice actress Ilene Woods and his rendering of the title character from 1950's *CINDERELLA* (right). **LEFT:** Davis works with model sheets for *SLEEPING BEAUTY*. **ABOVE:** The magnificent Maleficent in full snarl, supreme evil from the pencil of one of Disney's fabled "nine old men."



Reality ain't what it used to be.

A Bug's Life

Special Effects

by LAWRENCE
FRENCH

For director John Lasseter, A BUG'S LIFE was a production filled with technical challenges. Just by setting the piece in a completely organic world meant that the combined forces of Pixar studios would have to come up with believable computer simulations for earth, wind, rain, and fire. On top of that, Lasseter wanted crowds of ants — over 700 in many shots — who would appear to be acting out their own thought processes, rather than behaving merely as mindless automatons. Achieving this effect without resorting to hand-animation proved to be difficult. “We had to find a middle ground,” explained technical director Bill Reeves, “where we could take data from an animator and use that to drive the simulator, which would in

turn propagate the animation in various ways to ants of all shapes and sizes, and give them different timings. We needed to scatter nuances throughout the crowd, to get the feeling that they're all reacting in their own little way.”

“Every big crowd animation scene I've ever seen is groups of very limited cycles that repeated themselves,” said Dale McBeath, the supervising crowd animator on A BUG'S LIFE. “Our goal was to get the crowd to act as a character, yet make each individual in the crowd appear to be fairly unique. How we did that was to fully animate an ant doing a specific behavior, just as if it was a hero character. We started with eight different characters, and broke their movements into small pieces, and through

software developed by Michael Fong, we combined these movements in random ways, so there are no cycles that are repeated. That allowed each character in the crowd to be fully animated.”

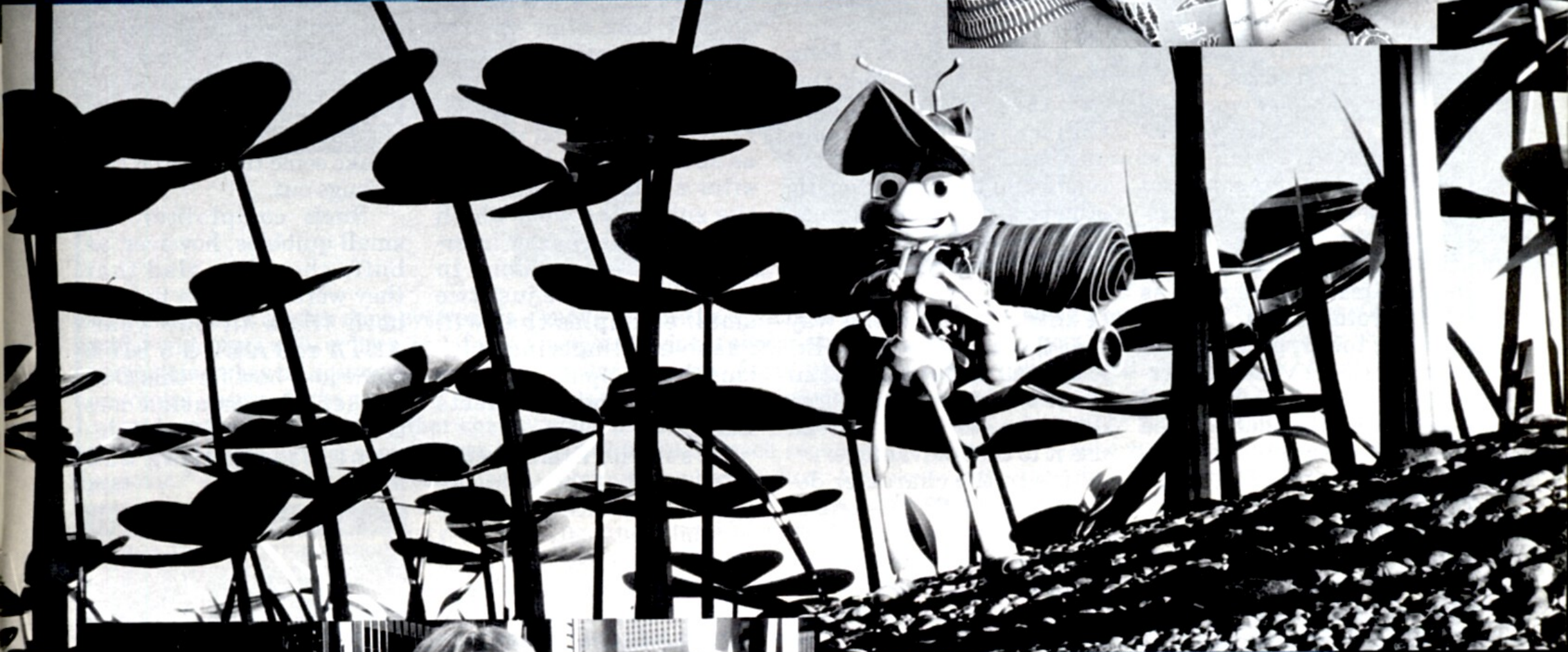
Fong, Pixar's technical director for the numerous crowd scenes, noted that although they started with eight base models, there were additional controls to vary the ants in the crowd. “We have controls to make each ant in a crowd smaller or larger,” said Fong, “and on top of that, we have shader controls that change the colors of each model. That allowed us to add an infinite variety to their appearance, as well as their movements.”

Lasseter was determined to use some of the behavior of real ants in the movie. “In my kitchen, my wife would see some ants and get ready to kill them with the ant spray,” said the director. “I'd say to her, ‘Wait a minute,’ and end up watching the ants for a long time, seeing how they'd move. My wife would say, ‘Would you just get rid of them?’ and I'd say, ‘No, I'm researching.’ I realized when I was watching various ants that we could do that in the movie. Nobody else in any other medium can do ants like we can. We can come up with ways to have a cycle for an ant carrying something, and put different things in his hands and multiply that out. In fact, we have software that even knows the terrain. You can create a path on the terrain, and create a cycle and have this long

GOOD'S IN THE DETAILS: Getting down to the microscopic world of ants (even four-legged ones) meant discovering a level believability never before attempted in computer animation.



Continued on page 55



WELCOME TO OUR WORLD: Flik, the hero of *A BUG'S LIFE*, finds himself venturing forth into a world as vibrant and complex as any captured on film, thanks to the artists at Pixar. **ABOVE:** Director John Lasseter. **LEFT:** Technical Director Dr. William Reeves.

ANTZ

Directed by Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson. Dreamworks, 83 mins.

Produced by Brad Lewis; Written by Todd Alcott, Chris Weitz, and Paul Weitz; music by Harry Gregson-Williams and John Powell

Voice actors:

Z	Woody Allen
Bela	Sharon Stone
Mandible	Gene Hackman
Queen	Anne Bancroft
Weaver	Sylvester Stallone
Muffy	Jane Curtin
Cutter	Christopher Walken

Comparing **ANTZ** and **A BUG'S LIFE** is most definitely one of those apples and oranges situations (or in this case, maybe a better analogy would be **DEEP IMPACTs** and **ARMAGEDDONs**). Oh sure, both computer-animated features are about insects, giving us a "grass-blade view" of the world. And yes, both films feature ants as their protagonists. But the stories, tones, and looks of each film are vastly different. Despite the schoolyard shoving match that seemed to erupt between both productions this past fall, **ANTZ** and **A BUG'S LIFE** can each stand firmly as their own creations.

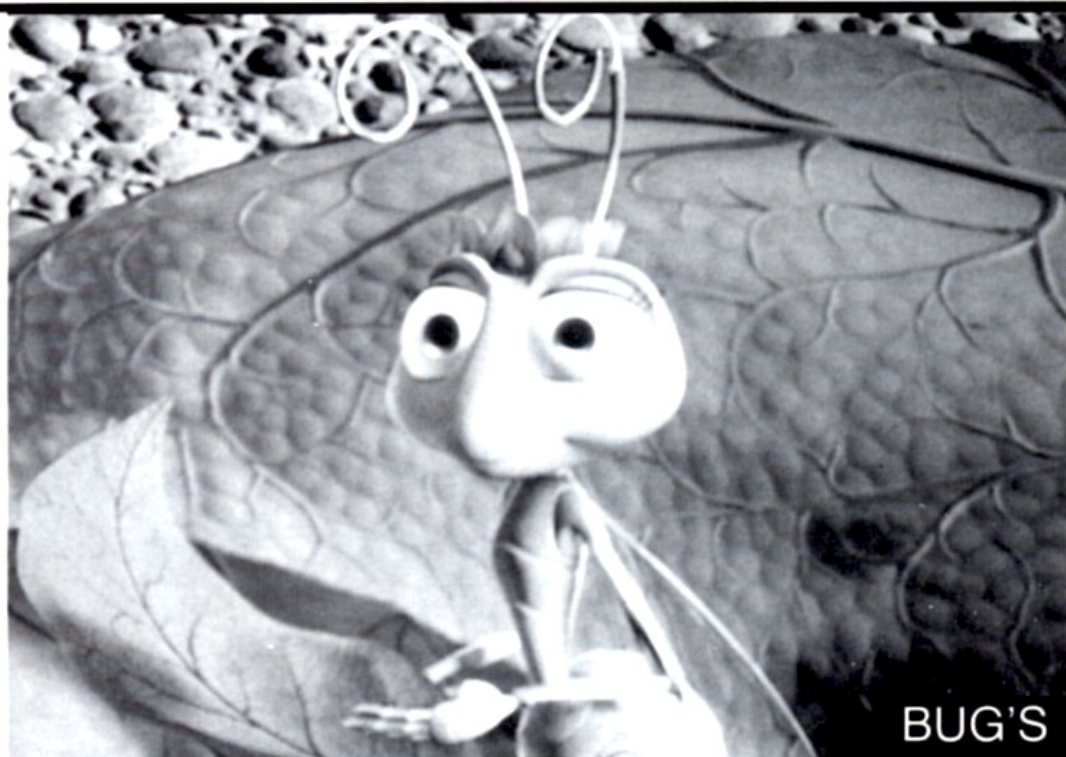
ANTZ has an adult, cynical, knowing attitude that lurks just beneath the sur-

face. The headset is a refreshing twist to a medium that seemed to be getting a little too comfortable with itself. **A BUG'S LIFE**, on the other hand, plays upon the familiar hallmarks of the medium, deriving most of its laughter from incredibly paced slapstick and wicked puns.

The disparate look of each film sets the tone from the outset. **A BUG'S LIFE** is a bright, colorful world, in which each insect seems to take on a different shade of the rainbow. This setting carries over to the film itself — an upbeat, light-as-air ambiance — made all the more bouncy by Randy Newman's wonderful music that recalls the best, infectious scores of Elmer Bernstein and John Williams.

If **A BUG'S LIFE** is John Ford mingled with Walt Disney, then **ANTZ** is a Terry Gilliam/Tim Burton co-production. Earth tones, muted colors and a monochromatic scheme set the perfect mood for this film that takes place mostly in a dank, overcrowded, underground city of ants. Of note is the way that the film's directors (Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson) never let this ambiance drag down the story, but instead use it to their advantage.

It's in the character design that **ANTZ** hits one of its stumbling blocks. With sharp angles and similar features, the ants in the film bear more of a resemblance to aliens than insects. More



BUG'S

successful are the rounded, wide-eyed creatures of **A BUG'S LIFE**, a design that allows room not only for the "squash and stretch" of animation, but also for more sympathetic characters.

Still, both films succeed in the personality animation department. Watching the face of Z, **ANTZ**' protagonist, register horror and sadness as he surveys the battlefield after a pitched conflict, or the subtleties with which the villainous Hopper interrogates the ant colony in **A BUG'S LIFE**, are just two small examples that will quash any lingering opinions that computer imagery is a cold, special-effects world.

It's in the films' action setpieces that the technology, blended with cinematic sensibilities, really shines. A battle scene in **ANTZ** combines the visceral violence of **STARSHIP TROOPERS** with the horror of **SAVING PRIVATE RYAN**; **A BUG'S LIFE** has its moments of equal impact — a bird attacks the insects like a T-Rex from **JURASSIC PARK**.

It is ultimately the strength of the plot that keeps both films afloat. **A BUG'S LIFE**, however, seems to have the more sturdier of the two tales, which, in this writer's opinion, makes it the better of the two "insect epics." John Lasseter, who co-directed **A BUG'S LIFE** with Andrew Stanton, uses the technology to serve the plot, which is

one of the smoothest to grace an animated film since his own **TOY STORY**.

ANTZ, on the other hand, has some clumsy moments (what exactly happened to the villain, Mandible, in the film's conclusion, anyway?) that makes one wonder if holding at their original release date of spring 1999 would have allowed DreamWorks some time to iron the, er, bugs out.

Such complaints are small quibbles, however, as buffs should be glad that they were fortunate to have both films in one year. **ANTZ** and **A BUG'S LIFE** show just how far this CGI subset of animation has come, in terms of entertainment, storytelling and artistry. AFQ

Mike Lyons

A BUG'S LIFE

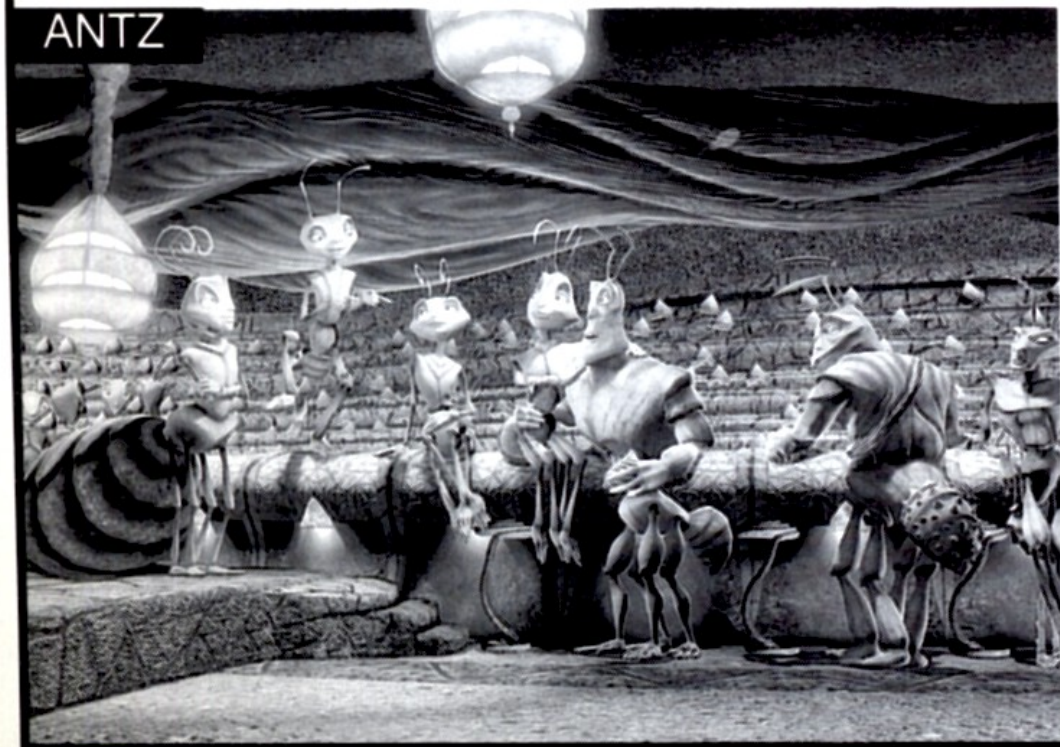
Directed by John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton; Disney/Pixar; 94 mins.

Produced by Darla K. Anderson, Kevin Reher. Written by Andrew Stanton, Don McEnery, and Bob Shaw. Music by Randy Newman.

Voice actors:

Flik	Dave Foley
Princess Atta	Julia Louis-Dreyfus
Hopper	Kevin Spacey
Gypsy	Madeline Kahn
Slim	David Hyde Pierce

ANTZ





THE INFINITE PALETTE: Carrying forward from the candy-colored visuals of *TOY STORY*, Pixar imbued *A BUG'S LIFE* with a rich range of shimmering, translucent hues. **BELOW:** Co-Directors Andrew Stanton and John Lasseter.



line of ants. That's another thing everyone is familiar with. Ants walk in lines, and if you do something, they all scatter. So we used some of that imagery in the movie."

Outdoor settings were another challenge. "When you look at some scenes in the movie," said Lasseter, "you realize that every blade of grass, every stone and every pebble had to be created and placed there, and there's so many of them. And whenever we're outside, there's no held backgrounds. Everything is blowing in the breeze, in a very natural way. Everything is organically shaped and doesn't feel like it was created by a computer."

To come up with these complex backgrounds on the computer and make them

move required a system to create motion without having it appear as if it were being created in cycles. Adam Woodbury, the effects technical director, came up with a program that allowed the wind to be controlled and directed for each sequence. "We had about six numbers to direct how heavy the wind would be in a shot," said Woodbury. "Originally we had about 1000 shots that had wind in them, so it had to be easy to get the wind at the right level for each shot, and also be able to set it, so it matched from shot to shot. So we reduced the wind program to a single control for all the different plant models in a scene setting."

"Typically, the set dressing person would set those controls right before the shot got to animation," continued Bill Reeves. "That way the animators didn't have to do anything with the background. But if an ant went up and grabbed a blade of grass, then we'd turn off the wind system, and the animator would actually animate the blade of grass, along with the ant that was moving it."

For the climax of the film, Lasseter wanted to have a chase through a rainstorm, and envisioned the rain as

being a real threat to the insects. "Rain to an insect is huge," noted Lasseter. "It's what I like to call Volkswagens of water landing near you. So when the rain comes at the climax of the film, it's spectacular."

"John wanted this very physical look to the rain," explained Woodbury, "where the volume of water didn't change over the course of animation, so it really looked like a physical event happening. They had to be like explosions. At one meeting John and [co-director] Andrew Stanton said to watch *GALLIPOLI*, and look at war movies with mortar fire coming in. So it's not so much like a water drop, because we added all this energy to the drops, to make them have a big impact. The audience won't see those things, but they'll feel them. For every splat of rain, there's four or five ants that get thrown out. If the shot was held long enough, you'd even see them getting up and shaking themselves off."

Lasseter summed up by noting the philosophy at Pixar has always been to push the outside of the envelope. "In every movie we do, there's something we've never done before. We start by coming up with a good story, and don't worry about handcuffing ourselves by the technology. It's only after we have a story, that we start to thinking about the technology that will actually be needed to make it."

AFQ



by MIKE
LYONS

Since Warners announced that they would be releasing an animated version of **THE KING AND I**, the film's director, Richard Rich, has been plagued by one, persistent question: "Why?" After all, **THE KING AND I** has been revived numerous times on and off-Broadway, and both non-musical and musical versions of the story have been translated to the big screen. So, why again... and why in animation?

"Out of all the questions that I'm asked, that is the one I'm asked the most," said Rich, a former Disney director, who eventually left to form his own studio (Rich Animation) where he directed 1994's **THE SWAN PRINCESS**. "I think this is a way to introduce this great musical to a generation that hasn't been exposed to it. What's also exciting is that many of us have seen the play and the movie many times, but this is a new way for every generation to be re-introduced to **THE KING AND I**."

The fact that the Rogers and Hammerstein musical has come to animation is almost an inverse reaction to what's been standard in the industry for the past ten years. With 1989's **THE LITTLE MERMAID**, Disney began a practice of fusing Broadway songwriters with the pen and ink world. The result was not only a revival of animation, but of another long dead genre: the movie musical.

Both Fox' **ANASTASIA** and DreamWorks' **THE PRINCE OF EGYPT**, have followed suit. Now with **THE KING AND I**, Warner Bros is simply skipping a step by transposing an actual Broadway show to the screen.

This, however, brought a new set of challenges in adapting the story for animation. "I knew that I couldn't just do a live-action play," admitted Rich. "What seemed to be most deadly were the number of songs, where the character just sits there and sings."

To make **THE KING AND I** more animatable, Rich introduced some more familiar elements. The film is still based on



**What hath PSYCHO
wrought?**

**Warner Bros. tests the
knock-off waters with a
more-or-less faithful
replication of the
Broadway hit.**

the true story of Anna Leonowens, an English widow who, in 1862, took her son to Siam to serve as governess for the King's children.

Absent from stage and now present on screen are those most popular of animated archetypes: animal sidekicks. Anna's son Louis adopts a frisky monkey named Moonshee, the King has a watchdog-like black panther named Rama and, in conjunction with a new subplot involving poachers, there's a baby elephant named Tusker. "The format of animation lent itself to this," said Rich of the new characters, "so they don't feel like extra baggage. We're trying to make what is essentially a very adult play very accessible for kids."

In that same vein is the addition of a villain, the Kralahome, Prime Minister of Siam, who has been writing to the British, defaming the King in an attempt to take over. The Kralahome also comes with his own comic sidekick named Master Little.

"In the original play, there is no villain," said Rich, "there is the hint that somebody is writing letters to the British, but you never know who is doing that. What we've done is somewhat obvious: we've made the Kralahome the one who is writing the letters."

The Kralahome also opened the film up to more fantasy elements, as the character will possess the power to create illusions. During the film's opening musical number, the Kralahome summons his powers to create a dragon out of the clouds. This element allowed Rich to expand the story even further for animation. "There is a song that the King sings called *A Puzzlement*, a soliloquy. On the stage, it's great, the King is working through all of these things in his mind. During the song, there are all of these Samurai warrior statues in the background. Through the Kralahome's powers, he brings them to life and they get closer and closer to the King during the song."

Here's how the plot of the animated **KING AND I** plays out: Anna and her son, Louis, come to Siam, where they find that the King has many stub-

born attitudes about tradition, including the notion that his son, the Prince, is forbidden to be seen with a slave girl (whom he secretly is in love with, of course). Anna and the King butt heads on many issues, especially Anna's teaching methods with the royal children. Meanwhile, the Kralahome's plans to overthrow the throne with letters stating that the King is a barbarian, forcing Queen Victoria to dispatch an English warship to Siam. Everything culminates in the film's action climax which involves a hot-air balloon, a rescue above a waterfall and a sub-plot involving a stolen pendent (all added for the animated version).

To achieve the right kinetic look for such scenes, Rich and his team of animators employed the animated feature's favorite contemporary tool: computer generated imagery. "We worked really hard with the CGI," said Rich. "Most CGI is this plastic, shiny, bright, glitzy stuff. We tried to make it work with the 2-D elements."

Rich Animation Studios also employed the very accessible cutting edge technology of the Internet. During production on *THE KING AND I*, the studio streamlined their process of working with freelance animators. The animators were able to do their work and then send it via the Internet to Rich's Studio. Richard Rich could then review it and send it back to the animators with any revisions he might have. In all, over 100 outside animators from around the globe contributed to the film. "I used to say, as I went to bed at night, 'Somewhere someone is working on *THE KING AND I*,'" laughed Rich.

To bring the world of *THE KING AND I* to life, the filmmakers also took extra pains to establish a distinguished look and tone. "We found every art book that we



GETTING TO RENEW YOU: Admirers of the Broadway original or the live-action filmed version may well have forgotten *KING & I*'s toe-tapping martial-arts production number (above) or the hilarious, comic-relief elephant who was the favorite of New York critics (below). Oh well, at least director Richard Rich held onto the king's children (left).

could find on Thailand," said Rich. "We went on to base our color palette and design on the history of Siam. It's a very bright palette — a lot of reds, oranges, bright greens and purples. It's very lush."

Rich notes that the colors also carried over to the character design. "One of the hardest colors to get on film is a red and we went through enormous testing to come up with a red that the King could be dressed in. We actually had to paint it a pinkish-orange, so that it would register as red on the film stock."

No matter what critics or audiences may think of *THE KING AND I*, the film already has one major asset: the classic musical score from Rogers and

Hammerstein. All of the familiar numbers, including *Getting to Know You*, *Hello Young Lovers*, and even *Shall We Dance*, make it into the animated version. In fact, for *Dance*, Rich leaned heavily on the famous Yul Brynner-Deborah Kerr dance sequence (from the 1956 film) for inspiration. "We really want to create that moment again. What they created was really important to us. As a matter of fact, we've moved the song to the end of our film. That is our emotional climax — the



King and Anna dancing together."

By ending with this most famous musical number, the new *KING AND I* pays homage to its predecessors, while hopefully teaching this story to "dance" in animation.

AFQ

Disney's purchase of worldwide distribution rights to eight films by Japanese anime master Hayao Miyazaki, including the theatrical distribution this summer of Miyazaki's **PRINCESS MONONOKE**, is a welcome step forward in introducing anime to the general public. If successful, **PRINCESS MONONOKE** could pave the way for more animation from abroad. And what a movie to start out with — **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE** is an astonishing work, a veritable masterpiece of cinema, animated or otherwise.

Unlike Miyazaki's earlier films, which were often geared more towards children, and set in a world without a specific nationality, **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE** is thoroughly adult in sensibility and rooted deeply in Japanese culture, history and myth, taking place in a world where gods in the shape of giant animals speak human languages and live deep in the primeval forests. Out of this beautifully realized specificity, Miyazaki unspools a story that is universal in its mythic appeal. He begins by directly plunging us into the midst of a fearsome battle: in medieval Japan, a maddened and wounded boar god rushes towards the edge

of its forest home, threatening a village of the Emishi people, who have been in hiding since their defeat by the ruling Yamato government. Their young prince, Ashitaka, valiantly defends his village and kills the boar god, but is cursed with an unhealing wound on his forearm, a wound that seems to have a life of its own. His only hope for a cure is to leave his village and search for the source of the boar's suffering. He departs on his loyal mount, the stag Yakkle, and heads into the forest, eventually coming upon the iron-working community of Tatara-Ba, situated upon an island in a lake deep inside the forest.

Tatara-Ba is in conflict with the creatures and gods of the forest who fear the iron-workers' encroachment on their sanctuary. The principal opponents are Tatara-Ba's founder, a strong-willed woman named Eboshi, and the equally stubborn wolf-girl San, raised by the giant wolf-god Moro as a daughter. Ashitaka becomes caught up in the antagonism, as well as the actual physical attacks, all the while becoming aware of his growing feelings for San. He soon learns that the boar-god's pain arose from this conflict, and that he must seek out Shishigama, the deer god, for purification of his wound. But he is not the only one searching for Shishigama, and the god becomes the focus of the film's shattering climax.

That's only the barest summary. **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE** contains a multitude of subplots and characters, some with hidden agendas. It is a profound, enchanting and haunting tale, its themes mythic in scope, with Ashitaka's quest for healing mirrored in the fundamental conflict of nature versus primitive industry (and versus a nearby, militaristic leader). The expansive cast of characters,



which includes a gallery of forest gods, spirits and demons, the workers of Tatara-Ba, a host of attacking samurai, and a roguish wandering monk named Jiko-Bou, are all carefully delineated. Ashitaka, Eboshi and San are complex, real people, with individual strengths and flaws. San, the Princess Mononoke, or Monster of the title, is, in particular, a fascinating creation. Fierce and unswerving in her devotion to her foster mother, Moro, and to the preservation of the great forest, San is as much animal as she is human, defending the only home she has known with the tenacity of the wolves in whose company she has been raised. In San, the movie reflects on the links connecting our "animal" selves to our "human" selves, and what it means to be human, even in a world where divinity comes in animal form.

Eboshi, too, is drawn in shades of gray; although her ironworks may signal the destruction of the forest, it also offers work, homes, and redemption for the outcasts of society, just as the forest and its creatures became a refuge for the abandoned baby San. Ashitaka is the most conventionally drawn of the three leads, but he too is thoroughly believable and sympathetic, as the objective outsider caught between these two women. Even the relationship between San

and Ashitaka is played out in unexpected ways. No overt romance here; Miyazaki resists any such platitudes. Romantic love takes second place to the call of home and family and to one's self. Is reconciliation and compromise possible between Tatara-Ba and the gods of the forest? Miyazaki refuses to hand us a neatly wrapped and tied answer; the end is really just the beginning.

Visually, **PRINCESS MONONOKE** is breathtaking, not only for its depiction of Japanese culture — the clothing, buildings, firearms — but for its spectacular rendering of the country's landscape. The forest, the mountains, the fields and meadows, the lake, Tatara-Ba, Ashitaka's village, even the sky and the clouds, or stars at night, all have a tangible, living presence. These places, rendered in exquisitely drawn, colored and shaded animation (are there really that many shades of green?) leap off the two-dimensional screen. They magically become three-dimensional and utterly real, even though Miyazaki's Japan is a world wholly unto itself, not to be found in any other film, except perhaps as a reflection of the director's beautiful landscapes in his earlier movies. A highly personal work, **THE PRINCESS MONONOKE** is a film to be savored, over and over.

APQ

Paula Vitaris

MONONOKE HIME (THE PRINCESS MONONOKE)

Written and Directed by Hayao Miyazaki; Studio Ghibli; 133 mins. Japanese language release reviewed, with English synopsis.

Voice actors:

Ashitaka	Yoji Matsuda
San	Yuriko Ishida
Lady Eboshi	Yuko Tanaka
Moro	Akihiro Miwa
Jiko Bou	Kaoru Kobayashi

Unfamiliarity with running characters and plotlines can sometimes bode ill for a film that has been generated from a series. This is not the case, however, with **THE RUGRATS MOVIE**. The script, by David N. Weiss and J. David Stem is written with such a sensitivity toward its characters and its story that **THE RUGRATS MOVIE** can be enjoyed solely on its own.

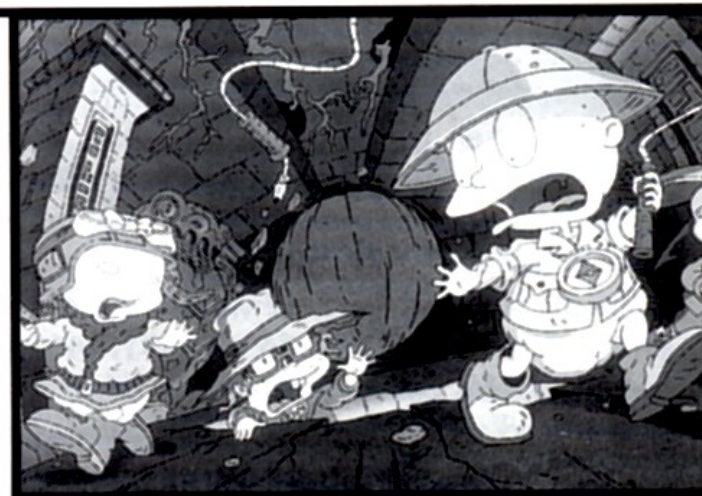
As loyal fans of the TV show know, The Rugrats are a group of toddlers who exhibit amazingly precocious behavior. At the start of **THE RUGRATS MOVIE**, Tommy Pickles, age one, is jealous of his newborn baby brother, Dylan ("Dill") Pickles. Enter Tommy's friends Chuckie, and the twins Phil

and Lil, who decide to return Dill to the hospital where he was born so Tommy will once again be the apple of his parents' eyes. The twins and Chuckie load Dill into a dinosaur-shaped toy car that Tommy's ne'er-do-well father Stu has invented, and cart the baby off. Tommy and his cousin Angelica uncover the plot, and take off in pursuit. The chase takes The Rugrats into the depths of a lush, but decidedly unfriendly forest.

Where **THE RUGRATS MOVIE** weakens is in its attempts to capture the attention of its massive juvenile audience. There is a protracted sequence involving some bad-tempered runaway circus monkeys — supposedly funny and threatening, but

merely bothersome. A running gag about one of the adults constantly slipping off into dreamland falls completely flat. One segment — unforgivable for its ferocity — has the children encountering a vicious, slavering wolf, the animal's appearance apparently inserted simply for the sake of providing an easy scare.

But the beauty of this film, aside from the breathtaking, richly-textured color and superb animation, lies in the awareness that the people we are watching, babies or grownups, are individuals, with quirks, bad habits, and endearing qualities that all human beings share. Stu Pickles is a bungler, but he is by no means stupid. Angelica is a bully and a tease, but she is also



genuinely concerned with the welfare of her friends.

The results can be unsettling. When Angelica upstages Susie at a baby shower, it is obvious the girl is angered and humiliated. When the kids temporarily lose sight of Dill while in the forest, Tommy declares he is going to find his baby brother, even if he has to do it all by himself. He walks off, his frail shoulders bent, his disposable diaper sagging around his knees, a determined, but frightened and lonely little guy. **AFQ**

THE RUGRATS MOVIE

Directed by Norton Virgien and Igor Kovalyov; Paramount; 100 mins. Voices: E.G. Daily; Christine Cavanaugh; Kath Soucie; Cheryl Chase; Tim Curry.

REDUX RIDING HOOD

Directed by Steve Moore; Disney; 20 mins. Voices: Michael Richards; Mia Farrow; Don Rickles; Adam West; Fabio.

One of animation's nicest surprises in recent years has come not from a small, independent filmmaker, but from that leviathan of the industry, Disney. **REDUX RIDING HOOD**, a short subject created by the Television Animation branch of the studio, is loopy, satirical fun that gleefully plays with the possibilities of the medium.

The short subject, which was created for Disney TV's **TOTALLY TWISTED FAIRY TALES**, gained some attention on the festival circuit last year. Disney didn't (and doesn't) quite know what to do with this strange, yet immensely entertaining creation, which managed to find itself nominated for an Academy Award last spring.

As the film opens, we meet the Wolf, of little Red

Riding Hood fame. It's now several years since the events of the fairy-tale have transpired and the Wolf is a washed-up, burnt-out mechanic, living life in the suburbs with his wife, Doris the sheep, and trying to deal with the fact that he blew it all those years ago at Grandma's house.

He is soon obsessing (in a **SHINING**-like moment, he scrawls "RED" over every inch of the bedroom wall) to the point that he realizes he must do something about it. His solution? Why, build a time machine of course — to go back and take care of them all: Little Red, Grandma and even the Woodsman!

What unfolds, as the Wolf continually goes back in time, meeting his past self with each trip, are fast-paced disasters, delivered

in great Tex Avery fashion (one time, Grandma wheels out a tank, another time, the local fire department shows up, etc.).

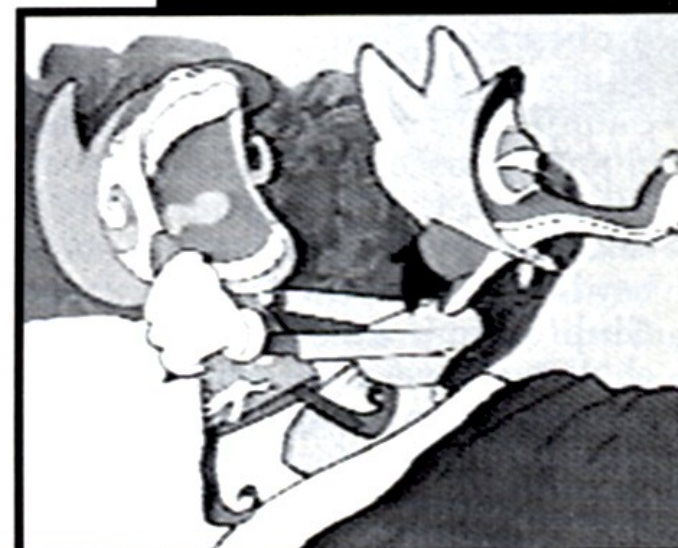
Adding to the proceedings is a vastly eclectic cast of big-name voice talents. Michael Richards is perfect as the strung-out Wolf; Mia Farrow does a nice, dour turn as his fed-up wife, Doris the sheep. On the side of sublime, kitschy casting, there's Don Rickles as the Wolf's boss; Adam West as Doris' unrequited high school lover and Fabio as the Huntsman. To top it all off, Garrison Keillor (you read that correctly) narrates the tale.

REDUX director Steve Moore keeps a tight lid on all of this, utilizing creative camera angles and editing that allow things to move along smoothly. In addition to Av-

ery, the influences of Terry Gilliam's **MONTY PYTHON** cut-out animation and Ward Kimball's eccentric style are also evident. Dan O'Shannon's script also serves as a wonderful salute to the same sharp edge Jay Ward brought to **ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE**'s "Fractured Fairy Tales."

In all, **REDUX RIDING HOOD** is that rarity among animated films (especially from a big studio): it's true to the traditions of the medium, while daring to be something all its own. **AFQ**

Mike Lyons



A grieving young girl is comforted by a handsome prince on a white horse. He counsels her to be strong, and gives her a rose crest ring to remember him by, saying that it will lead her to him again. As he rides off, the young girl is so impressed with him that she vows...to become a prince and rescue princesses herself?

This bizarre scenario is the premise of the peculiar yet enjoyable REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA, a beautifully illustrated anime series featuring a secret society, forbidden duels, and undying friendships. Fascinating both for its dreamlike imagery of rose petals on the wind and for its dramatic swordplay, REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA is one of the first anime primarily intended for a female audience to be made available in America.

When Utena arrives, she finds a locked gate that only her rose crest ring can open. Inside, a giant, surrealistic, spiral staircase leads to a treetop arena, over which hangs a floating palace not visible from outside. Waiting for her are Saonji and his girlfriend, who introduces herself as Anthy, the Rose Bride.

Utena has brought only a bamboo practice sword. Saonji, however, fights with a real sword, drawn supernaturally out of the Rose Bride's body, and slices Utena's practice sword in two. Nonetheless, Utena manages to cut the rose from his chest and win the match. Much to her surprise, she finds that Anthy now considers herself Utena's fiancé, explaining that the Rose Bride must do

the rose crest, the Floating Palace, and the mysterious prince who comforted her so long ago.

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA bears all the earmarks of vintage *shojo*: giant, liquid pupils touched



Until now, most of the animation brought over from Japan has been *shonen*, or boys' stories. These stories are characterized by bright primary colors, fast-moving plots, and daring action — much like what we have

come to expect from Western cartoons. But the Japanese also excel in *shojo* — girls' — stories. *Shojo* comics have a tradition as rich as that of their masculine siblings, with a style all their own. Instead of bright colors and daring action, *shojo* stories stress romantic mood and dreamlike atmos-

phere, made tangible through a liberal use of pastels, flower motifs, and large, liquid, starry eyes.

In *Manga! Manga!*, the author Frederick Schodt describes *shojo*. "It depends greatly on the use of montage. Pictures flow from one to another rather than progress with logical consistency from frame to frame. They may fuse into a medley of facial close-ups, free-floating prose attached to no particular character, rays of light, and abstract flowers and leaves that waft slowly across pages with no seeming relationship to the story."

with stars; storms of rose petals; stylistic rose borders which frame toe to head shots each time a character undergoes a fashion change. With its choral chants and dreamlike musical interludes, the show is definitely something you wouldn't see coming out of a Western animation house. However, once one understands the purpose of the unfamiliar conventions, UTENA becomes eminently enjoyable, and hardly just for girls. The pastels and dreamy mood may be pleasing the female audience, but the subtle intrigue and clashing swordfights appeal directly to both sexes. One might say REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA offers the best of both worlds. **APQ**

"Eminently enjoyable, and hardly just for girls."

Now a student at Ohtori Academy, spirited Utena, with her flowing pink hair, strives to make her dream reality. She insists on wearing a boy's uniform, stands up to her teachers, and beats the boys at basketball. When her best friend is humiliated by arrogant upperclassman Saonji, Utena gets the chance to become the hero she desires, challenging him to a duel, even though the boy is captain of the Kendo Club. Saonji accepts the challenge, under the condition that they meet at the Forest Arena, a forbidden grove behind the school.

the will of the champion of the rose crest duels.

As the story continues, Utena is drawn into the strange world of the elite student council who rules the school with an iron grip. Its members receive secret messages from the mysterious "End Of The World," instructing them to fight duels in order to see who will win the Rose Bride and, ultimately, enter the Floating Palace. Each of the members of the student council wear rose crest rings. Now, if Utena can successfully win against all challengers, she might yet learn the secret of

L. Jagi Lamplighter

**REVOLUTIONARY GIRL
UTENA
Vol. 1**

Software Sculptors; 100 mins.
English dub reviewed.

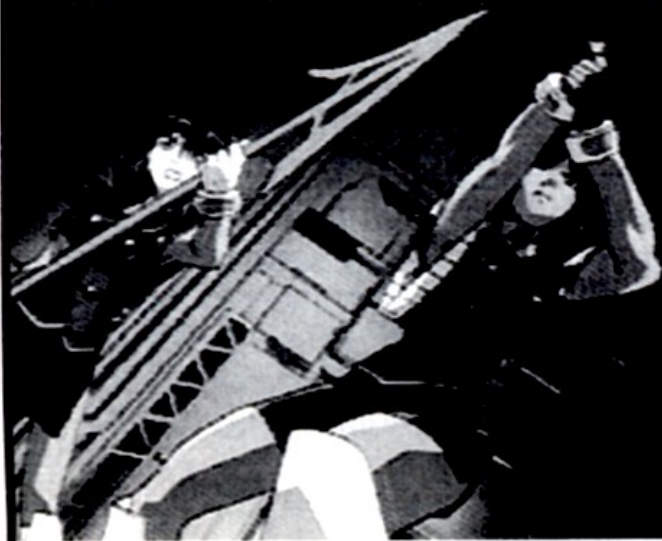
Directed by Kunihiro Ikuhara;
TV Tokyo/Yomiuri Advertising.
Original Story: B-BABAS

Voice actors: Rachel Lillis;
Sharon Becker; Chrispin
Freeman

SILENT MOBIUS

For those of you old enough to remember, there once was a manga series by Kia Asayama called **SILENT MOBIUS**, and later two motion pictures. Some of the manga and the first movie were released domestically but have long since gone out of print. But due to the latest TV anime trend of reviving older series (**BUBBLEGUM CRISIS**, **GETTA ROBO**), you don't need to have read the manga or seen the movies to understand the series.

In 2024 the Attacked Mystification Police are an elite force of spiritualists, ESPers, and soldiers fighting the forces of the Lucifer Folk. Powered armour, heavy artillery, and a network of last-resort orbital beam cannon satellites, along with spirit wards and demon swords, make up the AMP demon fighting arsenal. While the motion picture focused mainly on one woman's fight to come to terms with her identity and her destiny, the TV series fea-



tures more of the AMP — such as the previously manga-only character Lum Cheng — and their relationships beyond demon fighting. Not to say there isn't a good deal of demon fighting, though — in the series we actually see that Lebia and Rally have powers beyond giving orders.

The TV series has all the tension and atmosphere of the movies and then some. In one of the story arcs a huge demon is destroying the city while one of the AMP (a main character, no less) has been possessed and is beating the AMP from the inside out. And all this while one of the beam satellites counts down.

Be warned, the words *To Be Continued* are the most frustrating in any language.

Even Nelson

RARE EARLY SHORTS

Beautiful, unusual, and innovative, the quartet of little-seen (in the U.S. at least) shorts that New York's Japan Society used to kick off their recent anime series couldn't have provided a more striking demonstration of the depth and range of animation art as it is practiced across the Pacific.

Osamo Tezuka was represented by the pilot episode of **RIBON NO KISHI** (**PRINCESS SAPPHIRE**). That, in some ways though, was a come-on to get people in for the genuine meat of the program: two shorts by cut-out animation master Noburo Ofuji, and a impressive bit of cartoon fantasy produced during the thick of WWII by Kenzo Masaoka.

Ofuji's **KUJIRA** (**WHALE**) and **YUREI-SEN** (**GHOST SHIP**) were filmed four years apart in 1952 and 1956, respectively, and are thematically related in their tales of nautical quests come afoul by supernatural powers. Using paper and cellophane cut-outs in a sophisticated form of shadow animation, Ofuji spins a pair of haunting (both thematically and artistically) sea tragedies. Especially evocative is **GHOST SHIP**'s opening survey of the titular, doomed ship, a craft floating aimlessly through a roiling, cellophane sea. At once delicate and graphic, the image stays long after the last fade-out.

The genuine revelation of the program was **KUMO TO CHURIPPU** (**SPIDER AND TULIP**). Self-funded by director Kenzo Masaoka in 1943 (the sole patron of the arts at the time, the military, being loathe to bankroll anything without a suitable, propagandistic theme), this tale of a ladybug being "courted" by a spider both demonstrated how pre-Sixties Japanese animators sought to replicate the anthropomorphised stylings of Disney films, and how, by instinct, they struck out in their own, unique directions. Interestingly modeled (the ladybug has the body of a young girl crossed with the expected carapace) and controversial even for its time (that minstrelsy, black-face spider), this title ranked as the evening's major find.

Dan Persons

CORRECTION

In the Mamoru Oshii interview [1:1], the director of **NIRUSU NO FUSHIGI NA TABI** was miscredited. The name should have been Hisayuki Toriumi.

BRAIN POWERD

Young Yuu pilots a giant Grand Cher robot and believes in the Orphan project, an attempt to raise the underwater city of Orphan to the surface. One day, he meets Utsumiya Hime, who is riding in a Brain Powerd unit, a new breed of robot that runs off organic energy. Utsumiya Hime tells him that Orphan is part of an American plot to dominate the rest of mankind. As Orphan rises, she explains, it floods cities all over the Earth, causing ruin and devastation. At first, Yuu does not believe her, but eventually realizes the error of Orphan's ways. He joins the resistance, becoming a Brain Powerd pilot himself.

His past eventually comes back to haunt him. Yuu discovers that a resistance project could damage the Earth. He tries to warn his compatriots, but his background makes the other members suspicious of him. Now Yuu must find a way to prove his loyalty and save the Earth.

BRAIN POWERD is a complicated, intricate series currently spanning over twenty episodes. The show bears a superficial resemblance to **NEON GENESIS EVANGELION**: both feature a complicated plot revolving around giant living robots that require special human pilots. Both have main characters with troubled home lives, flooded cities, a cool blond female leader, a beautiful brunette with a subtle boyfriend, and a perky red-head. (The two shows also share similar villains: Angels? Americans?...just a thought.)



However, **BRAIN POWERD** lacks the dramatic action that makes **EVANGELION** so compelling. The most intriguing aspect of **BRAIN POWERD** is the beautiful, flying, naked women in the opening credits... an opening that proves merely a teaser as the women within the series remain clothed.

APQ

L. Jagi Lamplighter

WE'RE OFF TO OKINAWA: THE REAL YAMATO (PART II)

RUSSELL J.
HANDELMAN

Looking at the story of the battleship *Yamato*'s last voyage, it becomes clear as to why the animated TV science-fiction series *SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO* (a.k.a. *STAR BLAZERS* in the U.S.) became so popular and enduring in Japan. In a culture where feelings of shame, rather than guilt or sin, may be the prime motivator of human emotions and deeds, seeing *Yamato* vindicate itself in animated form, defending the very Earth itself against annihilation, may have been a form of powerful catharsis. The original *Yamato*, bearing the name of the people who built her, never had the opportunity to strike an effective blow in their name and ultimately failed to protect them, paying for it with her life. Now, she could rise from the dead and fulfill her mission over and over again.

On the afternoon of April 6, 1945, five days after the initial American landings on Okinawa, *Yamato* set sail from Kure, accompanied by an escort consisting of the cruiser *Yahagi* (named after a river) and eight destroyers. The enlisted men, mostly young and many going into combat for the first time, seemed to believe that their mission could succeed, or at least tried to convince themselves that it could. As for the officers, most had no illusions about their chances.

As *Yamato* and her escorts passed through the Bungo Straits between the islands of Kyushu and Shikoku, they were spotted by American submarines on picket-duty. Only the fact that the submarines were under orders to radio all sightings to headquarters and receive confirmation before attacking kept *Yamato*'s mission from ending only a few hours after it had begun.

The submarines' report was relayed at once to the American Fifth Fleet surrounding Okinawa. At about 10:00 A.M. on April 7, American scouting planes from the Fifth Fleet made contact with *Yamato*'s fleet. The first wave of American dive-bombers and torpedo-bombers struck about 12:35 P.M. Over the next two hours, three waves of attacking aircraft swept over the last of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Although much faith had been placed by *Yamato*'s crew in their unique "bee-hive" shells, which were designed to burst in stages and decimate enemy aircraft, they were betrayed by *Yamato*'s much-vaunted 18.1 inch guns; designed for the surface battle that would never be, they could not be elevated sufficiently to menace the Americans.

Four of the destroyers and the cruiser *Yahagi* were either sunk or dead in the wa-

ter as the Americans concentrated their last attacks on *Yamato*. Betrayed once more by her designers, *Yamato*'s too-rigid armor plating caused her to shake herself to pieces under the concussion of at least 18 high-explosive bombs. Her overly complicated counterflooding system and internal watertight bulkheads were soon overtaxed by the onslaught of at least 11 torpedoes. Desperate to keep her level in the water, *Yamato*'s captain even began flooding belowdecks compartments, drowning hundreds of his own men. At last, repeated torpedo strikes on the port side began an unstoppable list. *Yamato* capsized in a matter of minutes; the few hundred survivors clambering along the barnacle-encrusted keel could see the great bronze propellers still slowly turning. Moments later, a tremendous explosion racked *Yamato*, sending a fireball 1,000 feet

into the air. The remaining survivors, flung into the oil-slicked sea, were all that marked *Yamato*'s grave. The Imperial Japanese Navy had ceased to exist.

The four surviving destroyers — *Hatsushimo*, *Yukikaze*, *Fuyutsuki* and *Suzutsuki* — moved in to rescue those left alive in the water. Receiving radioed permission from headquarters to return to port, the destroyers headed back to Kure, their mission ended less than 100 miles from where it had begun. Over 4,200 Japanese seamen lost their lives, over 3,300 had been aboard *Yamato*. The United States Navy lost 10 aircraft and 12 men.

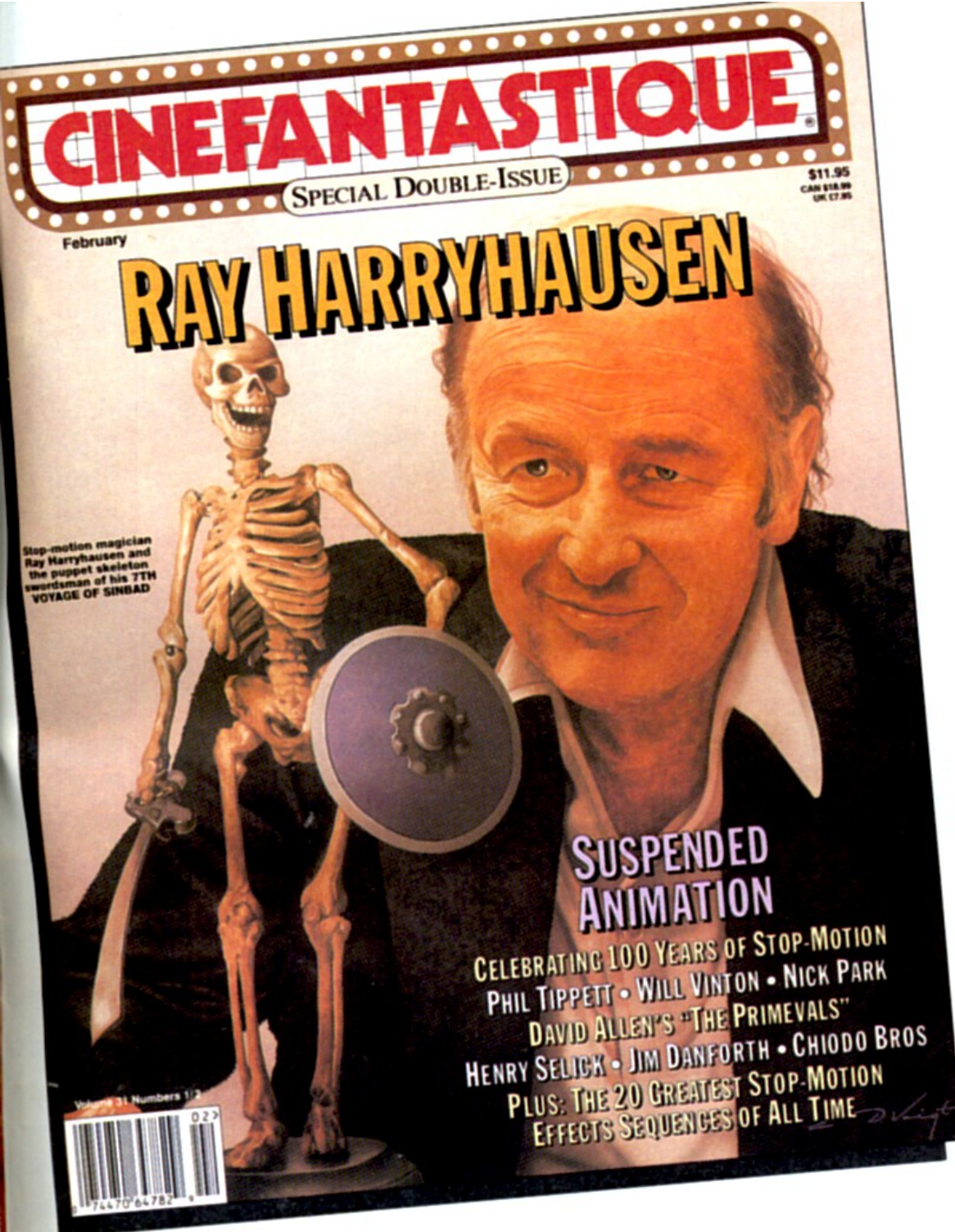
Yamato's suicide mission had virtually no impact, either tactically or strategically, on the Battle of Okinawa. Rather than bring the Americans to the bargaining table, as the Japanese had hoped, such tactics only reinforced the American military's belief that the Japanese were incapable of surrender and may have made easier the ultimate decision to use the atomic bomb.

Built to play a decisive role in Japan's conflict with the United States, the battleship *Yamato* perished as a minor player in a war already lost. But perhaps in her ink-and-paint rebirth as the lead player in the *BATTLESHIP YAMATO* series, she achieved a greater role: inspiring an understanding of meaningful sacrifice, demonstrating the meaning of heroic perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds. Permanently enshrined on film, the space battleship *Yamato* performs a greater service than the Imperial Japanese Navy's magnificent anachronism, obsolete from the day she was launched, ever could.

AFQ

BEING FOREVER YAMATO: Relegated to footnote status in the history books, the battleship has since risen from its watery grave to play a heroic role in the popular animated series.





THE REVIEW OF HORROR FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, YOUR GENRE NEWS MONTHLY

Did you miss our exciting February issue (shown left) on the 100th Anniversary of Stop-Motion Animation? This jam-packed issue contains the third and last installment of our continuing article on the career of stop-motion grandmaster Ray Harryhausen. Also in the issue, interviews with other stop-motion greats on the history and future of stop-motion, including Jim Danforth, David Allen, Henry Sellick, Will Vinton, Phil Tippett, Nick Park, the Brothers Chiodo, producer Charles Schneer, and more! The issue also includes a preview of *DINOSAUR*, the all-CGI animated feature that was once to have been directed by Paul Verhoeven, plus an update on David Allen's *THE PREMEVALS*. And stop-motion expert Neil Petti-grew profiles the 20 greatest stop-motion sequences of all time.

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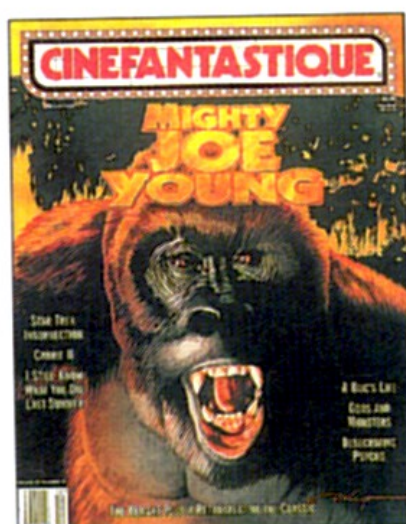
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Volume 30 No 11

A detailed retrospect of the making of Willis O'Brien's stop-motion classic, including interviews with stop-motion protege Ray Harryhausen, star Terry Moore and the filming of the remake. **\$8.00**



Volume 11 No 4

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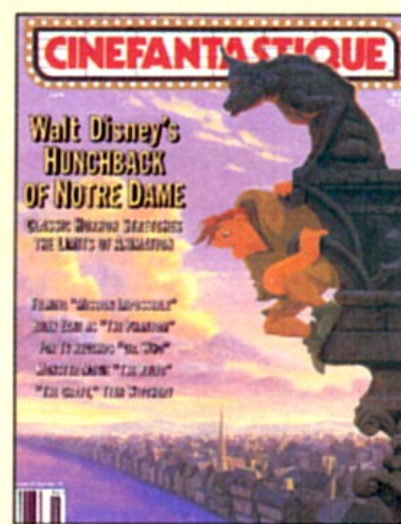
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